

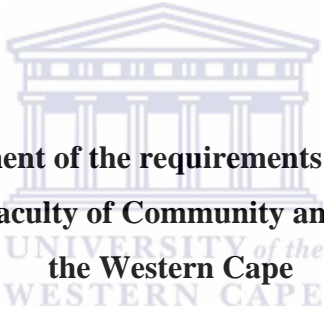
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY RESILIENCE AND ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS IN THE PHASE OF MIDDLE CHILDHOOD**

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**Full thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MA (CFS) in the
Department of Social Work, Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of
the Western Cape**

The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' below it.

January 2016

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ABSTRACT

Family resilience has a positive bearing on the academic performance of learners in the developmental phase of middle childhood. The role of family is often ignored and so there is a gap in the literature on the link between positive academic performance and family resilience. The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between perceived family resilience and the academic performance of children in the phase of middle childhood. A quantitative methodological approach was employed in this study with a cross-sectional correlational design. The type of sampling used in this study was convenience sampling. Three primary schools were selected and participants at the schools were randomly selected. The sample consisted of N = 194 Grade 6 learners from schools in the Penlyn Estate area. The reason for having chosen Grade 6 learners was that they are on the brink of puberty and have a good idea of how things function within the family and they were therefore better able to verbalise their opinions than were the younger learners in the phase of middle childhood. The data was collected using a self-reported questionnaire that included the demographic information and the Family Resilience Assessment Scale, as part of the quantitative methodology. The data was then analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences V23 (SPSS). The results were provided using descriptive and inferential statistics. Participation in this study was voluntary after being well informed, while confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. The results show that there is a significant positive relationship between the dimensions of academic performance and family resilience.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Families: a societal group that is related by blood (kinship), adoption, foster care or the ties of marriage (civil, customary or religious), civil union or cohabitation, and go beyond a particular physical residence. Department of Social Development (2012).

Resilience: The possession of several skills, in varying degrees, that help a person cope (Alvord & Grados, 2005). The common thread is that people have been able to lead more successful lives than expected despite being at greater risk than average for serious problems (Brooks, 2006).

Family resilience: This term refers to the family's ability to actively "bounce back" after experiencing a crisis or challenge, strengthened and more resourceful to meet the challenges of life. Families who are strengthened and more resourceful after a crisis or a challenge are not simply surviving or managing but growing and thriving (Walsh, 2002). The total scale score from the Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS) measured family resilience.

Academic performance: The multidimensional characteristics of a learner – including skills, attitudes, and behaviours – that factor into their academic success. These characteristics can be separated and considered in one of two primary domains: academic skills or academic enablers (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000; Elliot & DiPerna, 2002). Academic skills are both the basic and complex skills (e.g., reading, writing, calculating, and critical thinking) needed to access and interact with content-specific knowledge. Academic enablers, however, are the attitudes and behaviours (e.g., interpersonal skills, motivation, study skills, and engagement) that a learner needs in order to take advantage of education.

Middle childhood: A distinct developmental stage between early childhood and adolescence, defined by increasing cognitive development, emotional regulation, and relative social independence. (Campbell, 2011)

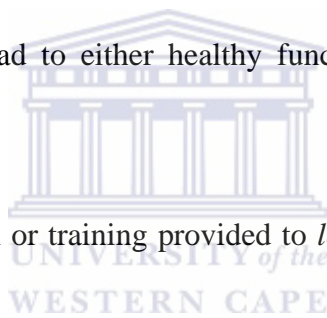
Family communication patterns: Family communication refers to the way verbal and non-verbal information is exchanged between family members (Epstein, Bishop, Ryan, Miller, & Keitner, 1993).

Belief systems: a combination of feelings, thoughts, actions, and expectations (Sykes, 1989).

Family organisational patterns: Family resilience is influenced by flexibility within the family, cohesion, and social and economic resources that interact to make the patterns of functioning. Family patterns lead to either healthy functioning or unhealthy functioning (Walsh, 2003a).

Education: teaching, instruction or training provided to *learners* (Western Cape Provincial School Education, 1977)

Family resilience framework: A family resilience framework was developed (Walsh, 1996, 1998b) to guide clinical practice. This framework is informed by research in the social sciences and clinical practice seeking to understand crucial variables contributing to individual resilience and well-functioning families (Walsh 1996, 1998b). By definition a family resilience framework focuses on strengths under stress, in the midst of crisis and overwhelming adversity (Walsh, 2003c)



DECLARATION

I declare that *The relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood* is my own work, that it has not been previously submitted for any degree or examination, and that all sources have been acknowledged.



Esther Alard

January 2016

Signed:.....

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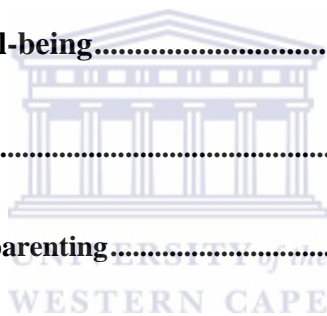
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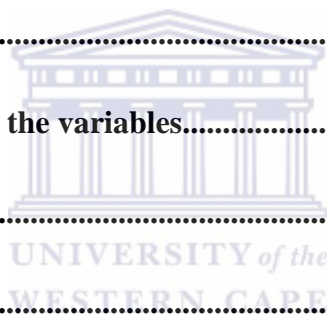
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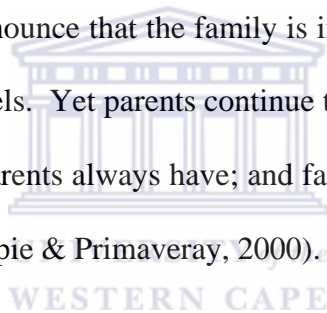
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

What qualities embody or define ‘strength’ in a family? Indeed, what qualities define a family? How can the work of human services professionals enhance, strengthen and support families’ lives? Researchers and practitioners alike grapple with such questions. The answers we provide, today and in the future, will shape and direct educational efforts, preventive interventions, and treatment approaches for children and their families into the 21st century. Politicians and media sources announce that the family is in jeopardy from multiple stressors at institutional and individual levels. Yet parents continue to nurture the children in their care and want the best for them, as parents always have; and families continue to overcome odds, thrive, evolve, and inspire (Gillespie & Primavera, 2000).



1.2 Middle childhood

Middle childhood is a crucial yet under-appreciated phase of human development (Del Giudice, 2014). According to Cherry (2014) children in middle childhood experience many developmental changes, both physically and emotionally. Middle childhood is marked by the continued development of cognitive skills, particularly those related to the ability to reason. During this time, trajectories of achievement are established and thereafter remain relatively stable (Kowaleski-Jones & Duncan, 1999).

A crucial shift in children’s cognitive skills occurs at around age six. Although the cognitive changes that occur during infancy and the preschool years are dramatic (as children learn their native language, for instance), almost all theories of development point to age six as the time

when children begin to actually reason in the common-sense meaning of the word. All cultures that provide formal schooling for their children begin between ages five and seven (Sameroff, 1996). Although the origin of the change is not well understood, there is a broad consensus that children develop key thinking or conceptual skills during this transition period, which are then refined and consolidated throughout the middle childhood years.

Middle childhood is marked by several types of advances in learning and understanding. During this period, in school and wherever they spend time, children acquire the fundamental skills considered to be important by their culture, such as reading and arithmetic (Selman, 1980). Skills of self-awareness also develop dramatically in middle childhood. For instance, children develop a notion of how one goes about learning, and they discover that strategies such as studying and practicing can improve learning and performance. They become more able to retrieve information and use it to solve new problems or cope with new situations. Both of these skills require the ability to reflect on what one is doing and what one wants to accomplish, and that ability increases dramatically during middle childhood. Children begin to plan consciously, coordinate actions, evaluate their progress, and modify their plans and strategies based on reflection and evaluation (Eccles, 1999). Finally, alongside their increasing ability to reflect on themselves, children also develop the ability to take the perspective of others. They come to understand that others have a different point of view and different knowledge than they have, and they come to understand that these differences have consequences for their interactions with other people. Through their growing understanding of other people's behaviour and through their grasp of written materials, children take in information that builds their knowledge base and stretches their reasoning capacities. The basic mental capacity for all of these skills is in place at a very young age, but it is during middle childhood that these abilities become salient and conscious (Selman, 1980).

1.2.1 Academic achievement in middle childhood

The development of good academic skills is a critical milestone of successful negotiation of the middle childhood period (Alexander, Entwisle & Horsey, 1997). A number of factors contribute to a learner's academic achievement. Among other factors, individual differences in traits, self-esteem, and self-efficacy beliefs have proven to be important predictors of academic achievement (Marsh, Trautwein, Ludtke, Koller, & Baumert, 2006).

Development of good academic skills and the formation of positive peer relationships are critical milestones of successful negotiation of the middle childhood period. Ve´ronneau, Vitaro, Pedersen, and Tremblay (2008) state that academic skills in the elementary school years predict later academic achievement and psychosocial adjustment in adulthood. Academic difficulties may lead to long-term patterns of school drop-out, academic failure, and problems entering a successful career in adulthood (Alexander et al., 2001).

Although the importance of academic achievement is rarely questioned, reaching unanimity regarding its measurement has been elusive. The measurement of academic performance continues to be a controversial topic among policymakers, measurement experts and educators (Ahearn, 2000; Elliott, 1998; Johnson, 2000; Koretz & Hamilton, 1999; McGrew, Vanderwood, Thurlow, & Ysseldyke, 1995). Measuring academic performance can occur at multiple levels and serves multiple purposes. For example, classroom teachers often conduct formative and summative tests to evaluate student mastery of course content and provide grades for students and parents. State tests are designed primarily to measure progress at the school or school district level. In particular, graduation tests are used to determine whether a student has mastered the minimum content and competencies required to receive a high school diploma. Each of these kinds of assessments engenders significant questions related to test

design, types of decisions supported by the results, alternative assessments, and accommodations (Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Minnema, Thurlow, Bielinski, & Scott, 2001).

Although performance on standardized tests receives the greatest attention in discussions of students' academic performance, teachers' evaluations of performance as indicated in course grades represent a common metric of student performance that often is more directly tied to the day-to-day business of teaching and learning than are annual standardized test scores. Grades serve a number of important functions. They communicate to students and parents information about students' mastery of course content. In high school, a passing grade is also the criterion for a course's contributing to accumulated credit for graduation. Finally, grades provide information for consideration in college admissions (Polloway et al., 1994).

Grades are composite measures that account not only for students' content mastery but often for other factors, such as their class participation, attitudes, progress over time, and attendance. Both general and special educators are known to consider these various factors when grading, but to emphasize different factors. For example, special education teachers are less likely than general educators to consider homework or attendance to be important in grading student performance, but are more likely to consider in-class participation to be important (Blackorby, Wagner, Levine, Cameto, & Guzman, 2003). Moreover, substantial variations in grading practices occur across teachers, schools, and school districts. Academic achievement is one of the most important indices of educational evaluation and reflects the socioeconomic development of every country. Academic achievement is assessed through measuring the degree of each student's institutional learning through his/her scores (Seif, 2001). Some students have sufficient mental abilities but cannot accomplish assignments and tests; they may experience academic achievement deficit and face educational challenges.

In this era of globalization and technological revolution, education is considered as a first step for every human activity. It plays a vital role in the development of human capital and is linked with an individual's well-being and opportunities for better living (Battle & Lewis, 2002). It ensures the acquisition of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to increase their productivity and improve their quality of life. This increase in productivity also leads towards new sources of earning which enhances the economic growth of a country (Saxton, 2000). The quality of students' performance remains a top priority for educators. It is meant for making a difference locally, regionally, nationally and globally. Educators, trainers, and researchers have long been interested in exploring variables contributing effectively for quality of performance of learners. These variables are inside and outside school that affect students' quality of academic achievement. These factors may be termed as *student factors*, *family factors*, *school factors* and *peer factors* (Crosnoe, Johnson & Elder, 2004). Many factors can affect academic achievement. Researchers have pointed to several different factors, which include: family factors such as the role of family and the impact of parenting styles (Samadi, 2007).

1.2.2 The role of families in academic achievement in middle childhood

Han (2008) describes the family environment as the most important factor in learning and development for children and research has generally demonstrated that children raised in dual-parent homes have better school achievement and higher educational attainment than children from single-parent homes. This may be because two-parent homes have greater resources, time, and attention to offer their children. Multiple caretakers also are better able to facilitate academic engagement and performance (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009).

1.3 Family resilience

In the 1970s, research began to shift its focus to understanding why some persons succeed in spite of adverse circumstances. This change in focus gave rise to studies on what is now referred to as 'resilience', which until recently has predominantly focused on characteristics of the individual. For instance, a review of the evidence shows that since the 1970s many children who were raised in deprived, adverse environments actually went on to become successful and loving individuals (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Research into resilience has since expanded to include various age groups and disadvantaged states, such as chronic illness (McCubbin, Balling, Possin, Frierdic, & Bryne, 2002), mental health issues (Jonker & Greef, 2009), poverty and violence (Luthar, 1999) and, catastrophic life events (Clay, 2002). Included in this array is family resilience (Patterson, 2002a). However, this early deficit framework soon gave way to a strength framework, when researchers discovered that some children did well and grew into healthy, adjusted adults despite living in poor environments during childhood (Werner, 1993; Wolin & Wolin, 1993). According to Pretorius (1998), our countless experiences with the world allow us to develop general beliefs about ourselves, and our world. People's evaluations of themselves, their abilities, support resources and their family environment influence their emotions and behaviour during interactions with the environment. Those who perceive themselves, their support and their environment negatively will have serious doubts about their ability to deal with stressful encounters and could consequently, succumb to possible negative psychological effects. Those who perceive themselves, their support and their environment positively will have a greater belief in their ability to manage stressful encounters.

The family's ability to function, according to Walsh (2002), is determined by the level of resilience in the family. Family resilience, as conceptualized by McCubbin and McCubbin

(1996), is the family's ability to utilize behavioural patterns and functional competence to negotiate, and even thrive through hardships and crises. Hawley and DeHann (1996) conceptualize family resilience as a path followed as families adapt and prosper in the face of stress, both in the present and over time. They believe resilient families respond positively to stressful conditions in unique ways, depending on factors such as developmental level, the combination of risk and protective factors, and the family's shared outlook. Several years later, Patterson (2002) also conceptualized family resilience as the adaptive process families utilize to adapt and function competently following exposure to significant adversity or crises. Walsh (2003) has a similar definition, but extends it to include not only a 'bouncing back' after adversity but the ability to 'bounce forward' as well. Walsh (2002) defines family resilience as more than just the usual resilience definition of overcoming adversity, but "the potential for personal and relational transformation and growth that can be forged out of adversity".

The concept of family resilience extends theory and research on family stress, coping, and adaptation (Simon, Murphy, & Smith, 2005). It entails more than managing stressful conditions, shouldering a burden, or surviving an ordeal. It involves the potential for personal and relational transformation and growth that can be forged out of adversity. By tapping into key processes for resilience, families that are struggling can emerge stronger and more resourceful in meeting future challenges. Members may develop new insights and abilities. A crisis can be a wake-up call, heightening attention to important matters. It can become an opportunity for reappraisal of life priorities and pursuits, stimulating greater investment in meaningful relationships. Studies of strong families have found that when family members weathered a crisis together, their relationships were enriched and more loving than they otherwise might have been (Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985).

This family resilience perspective fundamentally alters the deficit-based lens from viewing struggling families as *damaged* and beyond repair to seeing them as *challenged* by life's adversities, with potential for fostering healing and growth in family members.

At a time of widespread concern about the demise of the family, useful conceptual tools are needed as much as techniques to support and strengthen couples and families. The concept of family resilience is a valuable framework to guide research, intervention, and prevention efforts. While some families are shattered by crisis or persistent stresses, others emerge strengthened and more resourceful. A resiliency-based approach aims to identify and fortify key interactional processes that enable families to withstand and rebound from the disruptive challenges they face. A resiliency lens shifts perspective from viewing families as damaged to seeing them as challenged, and it affirms their reparative potential. This approach is founded on the conviction that both individual and family growth can be forged through collaborative efforts in the face of adversity (Walsh, 1996). Children who are raised in a family where issues are constructively dealt with, are better equipped to thrive academically than children who are raised in a non-resilient family environment (Walsh, 2002). Whilst educators and parents have commonly investigated problems with learners' learning skills or methods of academic attainment by looking mainly at learner problems, the role of family is often ignored and so there is a gap in the literature on the link between positive academic achievement and family resilience. Zimmerman and Arunkumar (1994) state that research that focuses on people in a crisis situation and how they differentially adapt is needed to more fully understand the resilience process.

One of the enduring mysteries that confronts those who work with families and children – and those who are concerned with child and family policy – is why some families respond positively to serious threats and challenges to their wellbeing, while others in similar

circumstances do not manage to do so (Walsh, 2003). The concept of resilience has been developed by researchers to denote positive adaptation under adverse circumstances. Hawley and De Hann (1996) describe the family in two contexts: Firstly, and most commonly, the family can serve as a risk factor raising the vulnerability of family members. Some research outlines the kinds of family factors that create risk for family members (for example severe marital conflict, parental mental illness, and so on), while other research has identified factors that help family members be resilient in the face of family dysfunction (for example research on adult children of alcoholics). According to Potter, Mashburn and Grissmer (2013) the family is described in the context of influencing the acquisition of the academic skills. Adversities within families have the potential to do serious harm to family members. However, some children and their families will thrive despite these adversities (Baumrind, 1991). Specialists in the field of family development and family psychology have attributed this difference as being a function of resilience of the family (Patterson, 2002; Walsh, 2003). Secondly, the family can also serve as a protective factor to boost the resilience of the family members. Protective factors include “a good fit between parent and child, maintenance of family rituals, proactive confrontation of problems, minimal conflict in the home during infancy, the absence of divorce during adolescence, and a productive relationship between a child and his or her mother” (Hawley & De Haan, 1996, p. 285). Walsh (1996, p. 263) comments that “few have considered the family as a potential source of resilience that is, as a resource.”

1.4 Problem statement

When a family experiences stress, or a life change (positive or negative), the family enters a period of adjustment (Openshaw, 2011). During this adjustment period, the family system as a whole must adapt and change the way in which it functions (Olson & Gorall, 2003).

Openshaw (2011) states that family dynamics such as family functioning and family resilience, can influence multiple areas of an individual's life. One area that will benefit from these family dynamics, (in particular family resilience) is that of academic achievement. According to Carneiro and Heckman (2003) parental capacities, family resources and family environments matter for children's education and long-term wellbeing. The academic success of most students is largely determined by family influences (Pearce & Lin, 2005). Resilience research has traditionally revolved around individual risk and protective factors that enable people to succeed in spite of adverse circumstances (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011). According to Walsh (1996) researchers and clinicians have overlooked the resilience that can be found in families and fostered in couple and family intervention, because of their prior focus being on *individual* resilience, most often in surviving dysfunctional families. There has been no known research done in South Africa regarding the relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood. This proposed research therefore aspires to examine the relationship between family resilience and academic performance of middle childhood learners.

1.5 Research questions, aim and objectives

1.5.1 Research question

What is the nature of the relationship between perceived family resilience and the academic performance of learners in middle childhood?

1.5.2 The aim of the study

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived family resilience and the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

1.5.3 Objectives

The objective of the study was to

- Determine the perception of family resilience of learners in the phase of middle childhood;
- Assess the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood;
- Examine the relationship between and predictive effects of family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood

1.6 Hypotheses

Hypothesis: There is a significant predictive relationship between family resilience (family communication and problem-solving, maintaining a positive outlook, making meaning of adversity, family spirituality, family connectedness and utilising social and economic resources) and learners' academic performance in the phase of middle childhood.

1.7 Significance of the study

As yet, there has been little work that has specifically tried to implement the ideas that have emerged from the research on the relationship between family resilience and academic achievement of learners in middle childhood. It may offer parents, educators and future researchers a view of understanding the role of family resilience and its effect on academic performance, as well as inform possible interventions to be put in place. Families will know how they can overcome certain barriers and motivate each other by understanding how resilience and the ability to overcome adversity aid the academic performance of middle childhood learners. Educators may incorporate information on this topic into Life Skills

lessons to create awareness of family resilience. Practitioners may benefit from this study and use the opportunities they have with families attending screenings to discuss various concerns and refer where necessary. This study may also help future researchers to relate other variables to the respondents or different respondents to the same variables used.

1.8 Outline of thesis

Chapter one provides an introduction to this study and describes the aims, background and rationale, theoretical framework and problem statement for the study. It highlights the concepts of middle childhood development, academic achievement and family resilience. The objectives of the formulated research problem and hypotheses are introduced. The chapter ends with the significance of the study and a summary of the chapters.

Chapter two provides an overview of the theoretical framework of family resilience as a theory. It provides an overview of the theoretical underpinning of the study in two parts. The first part is aimed at explaining the history of family resilience, and defines the concept of family resilience. The second part is a detailed explanation of family resilience theory. Further it provides an explanation of family resilience factors, academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood, and how family resilience facilitates children's learning.

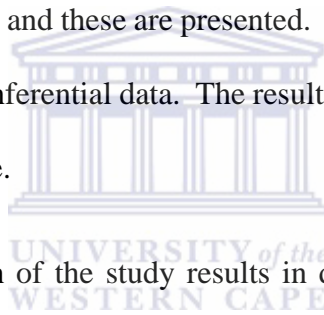
Chapter three provides literature relating to the four variables that form part of this study. These variables include: assumptions of family life, family resilience, academic achievement and middle childhood. The section on assumptions of family life includes family structure and well-being, family processes, positive and involved parenting, effective discipline and healthy relationships. In the section on family resilience studies, a longitudinal study in children's resilience and strength within families are discussed. The final section discusses academic

performance and middle childhood. In essence, this chapter refers to an understanding of family resilience and academic performance of learners in middle childhood.

Chapter four gives an overview of the methodology employed in this research study. It includes a discussion on the design, as well as, the sampling techniques implemented. The Family Resilience Assessment Scale is introduced. The procedures followed for the pilot and the main study are laid out. The data collection process, the analysis of the data and the ethical considerations that were employed are also discussed.

Chapter five provides an analysis of the findings of the quantitative data collected as well as a presentation using tables. Descriptive quantitative results are analysed using the Statistical package in social sciences (SPSS) and these are presented. The statistical presentation reflects the descriptive, correlations and inferential data. The results include information related to the demographics of the study sample.

Chapter six presents a discussion of the study results in detail. It also provides an overall understanding of knowledge of family resilience and student academic performance. The results are interpreted in this chapter and an outline of the limitations and recommendations of the study is given.

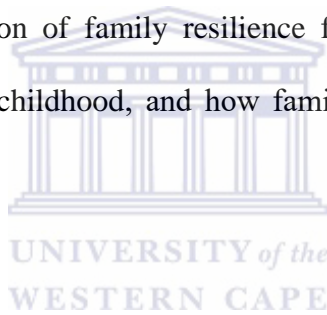


CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the aspects of the conceptual framework of this study. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an understanding of family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood. The first section of this chapter looks into the history of family resilience, and defines the concept of family resilience. This is followed by a detailed explanation of family resilience theory, which is the theoretical framework of this study. Further it provides an explanation of family resilience factors, academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood, and how family resilience facilitates children's learning.



2.2 Resilience

Resilience refers generally to the successful adaptation of a system in response to significant challenges. This concept can be applied to any living organism, as well as a family, a community, a workplace, the military as a whole, a computer system, a country, or a global ecosystem. "Successful adaptation," of course, will be defined in different ways, depending on the values, goals, culture, and historical or scientific context of the people making judgments about success. For individual children, both developmental and cultural context play a role in defining good adaptation. Developmental scientists often define resilience with respect to expected achievements for children of different ages or stages of development, sometimes called developmental tasks (McCormack et al., 2011). Some of these expectations are universal, such as learning to walk or talk. Others are more specific to a culture or situation,

such as learning to hunt or to read sacred scriptures in the original language. Families are often judged by how well they promote the health, development, and goals of their members within their culture or society (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2011).

2.3 History of the concept of resilience

Positive, strengthening adaptive outcomes in response to adversity have a long and renowned history. Evidence shows that since the 1970s, many children raised in high-risk environments did not mirror their deprived environments, but rather thrived and grew up to become productive and loving individuals (Luthar et al., 2000). Although many deprived or traumatized children became blocked from growth or trapped in a victim position, Rutter (1987) noted that about half of children exposed to high-risk circumstances overcame them, were able to lead loving and productive lives, and went on to raise their own children well. Research on resilience expanded to include various ages and disadvantaged states, such as poverty and violence (Luthar, 1999), maltreatment (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1997), chronic illness (White et al., 2004), and catastrophic life events (Clay, 2002). Early efforts to describe resilience focused on personal qualities of resilient individuals, such as autonomy and self-esteem (Masten, 2001).

Although social support and family relationships have been studied as predictors of quality of life, limited studies have been conducted on family resilience, or the way in which the family overcomes and grows from adversity or stressful events. The topic of resilience viz. the positive adaptation from significant adverse events (Walsh, 2003a), has experienced increasing attention over the last three decades (McCubbin et al., 1996). Orbuch et al., (2005) defined resilience as “the ability and competency of individuals or families to exhibit positive consequences given the stress and hardship associated with adverse and distressing situations” (p. 172). Resilience sprang from researching children, who despite terrible life conditions (e.g.,

poverty, abuse), were able to succeed in life (Sixbey, 2005). When studying these children, researchers began to focus on an innate ability within the individual to ‘bounce back’ (Luthar & Ziegler, 1991). Researchers termed this ability, “resilience.” There has been a discussion on the use of the terms “resiliency” vs. “resilience” (Sixbey, 2005). Resiliency is thought to be a state-like trait within the individual, while the term resilience denotes a process (Sixbey, 2005) in which an individual may not be resilient in every situation.

In the beginning, resilience was primarily associated with individual children. The family was viewed as dysfunctional and, most often, the cause of the adverse events. However, through happenstance, researchers began to observe that resilience was not only an individual process, but also a family systems process (Sixbey, 2005). Werner and Smith (1977) and Cicchetti and Rogosch (1997) were the primary researchers on family resilience (Sixbey, 2005). From their research, an evolution toward a more systemic view of resilience was initiated. Family was no longer viewed as damaged, dysfunctional, and problematic; instead, it was viewed as being challenged by life events (Walsh, 2003a). Moreover, McCubbin et al., (1996) expanded the definition of resilience to include family, defining resilience as the positive behavioural patterns and functional competence of both the individuals and the family unit under stressful or adverse circumstances; these positive behavioural patterns and functional competence determine the family’s ability to recover by maintaining the family’s integrity as a unit while insuring, and where necessary restoring, the well-being of the family members and the family unit (p. 5).

When compared to the development of other theories, the evolution of resilience research has been an organic, inductive process (Richardson, 2002). Rather than emerging from a structured theoretical approach, resilience inquiry has been guided by researchers’ observations about human experience. As a result, the development of resilience research has emphasized its

discontinuous nature (Miller, 2011). That is, individuals do not become resilient in a gradual, predictable manner. By definition, resilience necessitates a disruption in life, such as the experience of significant adversity, which in turn facilitates its development. In other words, without adversity, individuals may have the potential for resiliency (i.e., as a trait or personality characteristic) but not resilience, which describes the developmental process and sustained outcome of experiencing and overcoming adversity (Richardson, 2002).

2.4 The concept of family resilience

The concept of family resilience extends the understanding of family functioning to situations of adversity (Walsh, 2006. pg. 399). Walsh (2010) defines resilience as strength in the context of adversity, the ability to withstand and rebound from stressful life challenges, strengthened and more resourceful. Challenges may range from expectable strains of normative life-cycle transitions, such as retirement, divorce or remarriage, to a sudden job loss or untimely death of a key member, or to the prolonged strains of migration or inner-city violence. How a family deals with such challenges is crucial for individual and family recovery.

Family resilience provides a strong connection within families and the practise of it provides a bond which aids with a child's academic development. According to Shonkoff and Phillips (2000) children show significantly better cognitive and language skills, as well as positive social and emotional development, when they are cared for by adults who are attentive to their needs and who interact with them in encouraging and affectionate ways. The absence of such connections early on can harm a child's ability to develop normally. When children have secure attachments early in life, they tend to have better development, social interactions, and academic achievement (Teo, Carlson, Mathieu & Stroufe. 1996).

Resilience, defined as the ability to withstand and rebound from adversity, has become an important concept in mental health theory and research over the past two decades. It involves a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). Researchers have found increasing evidence that the same adversity can result in different outcomes. For example, although many lives are shattered by childhood trauma, others emerge from similar high-risk conditions able to live and love well, evident in the finding that most abused children do not become abusive parents (Kaufman & Ziegler, 1987).

To account for these differences, early studies focused on personal traits associated with resilience, or hardiness, reflecting the dominant cultural ethos of the rugged individual. Resilience was viewed as inborn or acquired on one's own, as in the "invulnerable child" thought to be impervious to stress because of inner fortitude or character armour (Anthony & Cohler, 1987). As research extended beyond situations of parental mental illness or maltreatment to multiple adverse conditions (e.g., socioeconomic disadvantages, urban poverty, community violence, chronic illness, and catastrophic life events), resilience came to be viewed in terms of an interplay of risk and protective processes over time, involving individual, family, and larger socio-cultural influences (Werner, 1993).

Notably, emerging studies of resilient individuals remarked on the crucial influence of significant relationships with caring adults and mentors, such as coaches or teachers, who supported the efforts of at risk children, believed in their potential, and encouraged them to make the most of their lives (Walsh, 1996). A family resilience perspective fundamentally alters that deficit-based lens from viewing troubled families as damaged and beyond repair to seeing them as challenged by life's adversities. Rather than rescuing so-called "survivors" from dysfunctional families, this approach engages distressed families with respect and compassion

for their struggles, affirms their reparative potential, and seeks to bring out their best. Research and intervention efforts to foster family resilience aim both to avoid or reduce pathology and dysfunction and to enhance functioning and well-being (Luthar et al., 2000). Such efforts have the potential to benefit all family members as they fortify relational bonds.

2.5 Family resilience framework

A family resilience framework was developed (Walsh, 1996, 1998b) to guide clinical practice. This framework is informed by research in the social sciences and clinical practice seeking to understand crucial variables contributing to individual resilience and well-functioning families (Walsh 1996, 1998b). Essentially a meta-framework, it can be used with a variety of models of intervention. It offers a conceptual map to identify and target key family processes that reduce the risk of dysfunction, buffer stress, and encourage healing and growth from crisis. The framework draws together findings from numerous studies, identifying and synthesizing key processes within three domains of family functioning: family belief systems, organization patterns, and communication processes (Walsh, 1998b).

A family resilience approach builds on developments to strengthen family capacities to master adversity (Walsh, 1996, 1998b). A family resilience framework can serve as a valuable conceptual map to guide prevention and intervention efforts to support and strengthen vulnerable families in crisis. Family resilience involves more than managing stressful conditions, shouldering a burden, or surviving an ordeal. This approach recognizes the potential for personal and relational transformation and growth that can be forged out of adversity. By encouraging key processes for resilience, families can emerge stronger and more resourceful through their shared efforts. A crisis can be a wakeup call, heightening attention to what matters. It can become an opportunity for reappraisal of priorities, stimulating new or renewed investment in meaningful relationships and life pursuits. In fact, families report that

through weathering a crisis together their relationships were enriched and more loving than they might have been otherwise (Stinnett & DeFrain, 1985).

A family resilience framework is especially timely in helping families with unprecedented challenges as the world around them changes at an accelerated pace (Walsh, 2012). Family cultures and structures are becoming increasingly diverse and fluid. Over an extended family life cycle, adults and their children are moving in and out of increasingly complex family configurations, with each transition posing new adaptational challenges. Amid social, economic, and political upheavals worldwide, families are dealing with many losses, disruptions, and uncertainties. Yet, as Lifton (1993) contends, humans are surprisingly resilient. He compares our predicament and response to that of the Greek god Proteus: Just as he was able to change shape in response to crisis, we create new psychological, social, and family configurations, exploring new options and transforming our lives many times over the life course and the generations. Most families show remarkable resilience in creatively reweaving their family life. Yet stressful transitions and attempts to navigate uncharted territory can contribute to individual and relational distress. A resilience-oriented practice approach assesses individual, couple, and family distress in relation to this larger societal and global context. Families may need help to grieve their actual and symbolic losses as they “bounce forward” to adapt. Therapists can help families to find coherence in the midst of complexity, and maintain continuities in the midst of upheaval as they journey into the future. Resilience does not mean bouncing back unscathed, but struggling well, effectively working through and learning from adversity, and integrating the experience into life’s journey (Walsh, 2012).

A family resilience orientation involves a crucial shift in emphasis from family deficits to family challenges, with conviction in the potential inherent in family systems for recovery and

positive growth out of adversity. By targeting interventions to strengthen key processes for resilience, families become more resourceful in dealing with crises, navigating disruptive transitions, weathering persistent stresses, and meeting future challenges. Although some families are more vulnerable or face more hardships than others, all are seen to have potential for gaining resilience in meeting their challenges, forging varied pathways. Beyond coping, adaptation, or competence in managing difficulties, resilience processes enable transformation and positive growth, which can emerge out of experiences of adversity. This research-informed conceptual framework can usefully be integrated with many strengths-based practice approaches and applied with a wide range of adverse conditions, with attunement to family and cultural diversity. Resilience-oriented services foster family empowerment as they bring forth shared hope, develop new and renewed competencies, and strengthen family bonds (Southwick et al., 2011).



2.6 Keys to resilience

There are particular keys to resilience. These are identified by Walsh (2006) in three different areas which are family belief systems, family organization and resources, and family communication.

2.6.1 Family belief systems

Family resilience is fostered by shared beliefs that help members make meaning of crisis situations; facilitate a positive, hopeful outlook; and provide transcendent or spiritual values and purpose. Families can be helped to gain a sense of coherence (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988) by recasting a crisis as a shared challenge that is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful to tackle. Normalizing and contextualizing members' distress as natural or understandable in their crisis situation can soften their reactions and reduce blame, shame, and

guilt. Drawing out and affirming family strengths in the midst of difficulties helps to counter a sense of helplessness, failure, and despair as it reinforces pride, confidence, and a "can-do" spirit. The encouragement of family members bolsters efforts to take initiative and persevere in efforts to overcome barriers. As such, therapists also can help family members focus efforts on mastering the possible and accept that which is beyond their control. Spiritual or religious resources, through faith practices such as meditation or prayer and religious or congregational affiliation, now have empirical support for their healing power. Many find strength and recovery through more soulful connection with nature or through artistic expression. Although spiritual resources have been largely neglected in clinical practice, they can be tapped as wellsprings for resilience (Walsh, 1999).

2.6.2 Family organization

In family organization, resilience can be fostered through flexible structure, shared leadership, mutual support, and teamwork in facing life challenges. Families in transition are assisted in navigating disruptive changes and structural reorganization, as with the loss of a parent or with post-divorce and stepfamily reconfigurations. Clinicians can help families counterbalance disorienting changes with stability. Especially valuable are strategies that reassure children and other vulnerable family members by coaching behaviours that reflect strong leadership, security, continuity, and dependability.

2.6.3 Communication

Communication processes that clarify ambiguous situations, encourage open emotional expression and empathetic response, and foster collaborative problem solving are especially important in facilitating resilience. Therapeutic efforts are future directed, helping families "bounce forward" (Walsh, 1998b). Families become more resourceful when interventions shift

from a crisis-reactive mode to a proactive stance, anticipating and preparing for the future. Most important, interventions help families in problem-saturated situations to envision a better future and take concrete steps toward achieving their hopes and dreams (Walsh, 1998b).

2.7 Prominent family resilience factors

A review of recent research and literature recognizes additional recurrent and prominent attributes among resilient, healthy families (Black & Lobo, 2008). These factors include: a positive outlook, family member accord, financial management, time together, mutual recreational interests, routines and rituals, and social support.

2.7.1 Positive outlook

An optimistic confidence in overcoming odds lies at the heart of resilience. Rutter (1987) identified an approaching style to new situations and a sense of humour as important features in viewing crises as meaningful or comprehensible. The importance of optimism was emphasized again by Rutter in 1993:

Almost certainly, it is not that there is one “right” way of thinking about things, or one optimal style of coping. Rather, what seems important is to approach life’s challenges with a positive frame of mind, a confidence that one can deal with the situation, and a repertoire of approaches. (p. 630) Bradbury and Karney (2004) reported that displays of positive emotions (such as affection, humour, offering positive solutions, and accepting suggestions) were more influential in marital satisfaction than problem solving or communication. Hope for the future was found to foster resilience, measured by the avoidance of risky behaviours, among 443 impoverished inner-city black female adolescents and to thwart risk-taking behaviours in Aronowitz and Morrison-Beedy’s (2004) study. Affirming strengths and possibilities, maintaining courage and hope, and remaining optimistic have been shown to be effective

methods of coping for families (McCreary & Dancy, 2004). Maintaining a positive outlook does not mean that negative behaviour is ignored, but rather that various viewpoints and each member's opinions are examined to identify underlying problems, always augmenting positive aspects (Leon, 2003). For example, moving to a new area could be seen as a burden for some families and met with resistance. For families with a positive outlook, the relocation could be seen as a welcome challenge and an opportunity to interact with new people and locations.

2.7.2 Family member accord

The premise of the systems approach to families is that the whole and its parts must be connected and content for both to continue. A family system works when its members feel good about the family, needs are being met, and the development of relationships flows smoothly (Olson, 2000). Family cohesion enhances family confidence that problems are comprehensible, manageable, meaningful, and that higher levels of reorganization and adjustment are reached after the crisis (McCubbin et al., 2002; Walsh, 1998). Well-functioning family members tend to interact on a daily basis with nurturance and compliments, and they reinforce each-others' efforts (Walsh, 2003a). The comfort and security of a resilient home may be seen as a protective and secure base for all family members (Bowlby, 1982). In times of crisis, the family's pulling together and turning to each other for support has been found to be one of the most important recovery factors in resilience (White et al., 2004). Children seem to do better when there is a fit between the temperament, personality, and needs of the children and the style of parenting they receive. This fit is best achieved when parents assume loving and leadership roles (Pruett et al., 2003). Discipline in resilient families tends to be authoritative and predictable, with mutual respect for all family members. An authoritative parenting style is characterized as warm and affectionate, clear and firm about expectations, yet not too rigid. Consistently practiced, this type of parenting and discipline has been found to achieve positive

child outcomes, such as perseverance, better school outcomes, and the development of resilience into adulthood (Masten, 2001). Conversely, too-strong parental control, or an authoritarian style, has been associated with poor child outcomes, such as behavioural problems, poor academic achievement, and less initiative (Morris et al., 2002).

2.7.3 Financial management

Financial pressure in families contributes to family tension and stress and has been shown to have a pervasive effect on emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships (Walsh, 2002). Family research suggests that economic pressures will first affect the emotional lives and marital interactions of adults and then diffuse into the caretaking environment of the children (Mederer, 1999). Poor families potentially confront multiple stresses, such as unemployment, substandard housing, lack of health care, crime, violence, and substance abuse (Staveteig & Wigton, 2005). The combination of psychological, social, and economic burdens of poverty renders families more at risk for multiple problems and crises due to forces beyond their control (Walsh, 1998). Despite these pressures, many low-income families not only meet basic needs, but are able to avoid violence and crime involvement, keep their children in school, engage their children in enriching activities, and maintain family cohesion (Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). “Sound decision-making skills for money management and satisfaction with economic status can contribute to family well-being” (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988, p. 248).

2.7.4 Family time

Spending time together during family meals, chores, and errands plays an important role in creating continuity and stability in family life (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988). Meal time appears to be the main activity families share together, totalling about 2 hours a week, followed by television viewing (Crouter et al., 2005). Time spent as a family unit has been shown to

decrease risky behaviour significantly in teenaged children (Milkie et al., 2004). Unfortunately, family time appears to be dwindling as a result of increased parental demands and responsibilities. More than half of American families feel they spend insufficient time with their children, according to Milkie and colleagues. Full-time employed mothers were reported to spend, on average, 50 hours a week with their preschool children, with fathers spending 33 hours a week. In contrast, non-employed mothers spend 63 hours a week with children, with time declining as the child enters adolescence and the young adult years. A common parenting phenomenon is time strain, conceptualized as the lack of spontaneity to respond to children's needs, fatigue, and inability to disconnect feelings from work (Milkie et al., 2004). Both employed mothers and fathers feel time strain, particularly when children younger than 6 years old are in the household (Voydanoff, 2004). Employer-sponsored efforts to reduce work-related family strain, such as child care and family-supportive programs, have not been shown to increase quality family time for working parents (Voydanoff, 2004).

Time strain will likely be a growing family concern with the trend toward dual earners and single-parent households. An effective way to reduce time strain and increase family time is to include the family in constructive family activities including housekeeping routines. Children may be assigned age-appropriate meaningful tasks, such as caring for the family pet, where they can learn skills, abilities, and empathy. Commute time spent together in the car or bus can provide opportunities for sharing family time through conversation, making future plans, or participating in fun learning activities.

2.7.5 Shared recreation

The multiple family benefits of shared recreation and leisure time have been found to facilitate family health. Enjoyable family time can yield attachments, intrinsic rewards, happiness, learning, humour, and the pleasure of shared experiences (Russell, 1996). Mactavish and

Schleien (1998) examined parents' perceived benefits of family recreation and concluded that "shared recreation was especially helpful in developing social skills, such as learning to problem-solve, to compromise, and to negotiate" (p. 221). A 5-year longitudinal study of 280 randomly selected couples conducted by Hill (1988) suggested that families who play together tend to stay together. There was a significant relationship between shared leisure time and lower divorce and separation rates. Interestingly, the presence of children in the household significantly reduced the amount of leisure time that is viewed important in counterbalancing stress and strains. Zabriskie and McCormick (2001) identified two types of family recreation: (a) core, or routine and common activities, such as playing a board game after dinner; and (b) balance, or novel activities, such as bowling. Both types of recreation were found to predict family adaptability and cohesion. Lareau (2002) argued that middle-class families tend to make deliberate efforts to spend time together. Working-class parents, however, felt it is up to the children to devise their own recreational pursuits; yet these parents strive to maintain safe play environments. Both approaches may be viewed as family strengths that promote either fun family time or child autonomy. In recent years, screen media have taken precedence as a leisure activity for many families. American families appear to be spending more time with television, video games, and the computer (Bagley et al., 2006). Although some educational and recreational benefits with moderate screen media usage have been found, the difficulty arises when family members sacrifice interaction time and physical exercise in favour of passive viewing. Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) described an "addiction" to excessive television viewing that can disrupt family cohesion. Moderate screen media use can be fun and educational for the family, but not at the sacrifice of true interactional activities.

2.7.6 Routines and Rituals

Based on reviews of 50 years of research on multicultural family routines and rituals, Fiese and colleagues (2002) reported common strengths that these embedded activities contribute to close family relationships, child socialization, and mitigation of stressful situations. Routines are defined as momentary time commitment tasks requiring little conscious thought. Rituals, however, involve symbolic communication with enduring, affective, and generational transmission. Research has indicated that families who practice routines and rituals are associated with better child outcomes and family stability than families lacking routines and rituals. Routines are often dismissed in the event of a family crisis, such as marital separation or illness (Walsh, 1998). The loss of a comforting practice, such as a habitual bedtime routine or family dinner times, can be unsettling to children. Well-functioning families attempt to maintain family routines in the midst of turbulence to provide the family with a feeling of predictability, cohesion, and comfort (Walsh, 1998). Young and older generations alike find rituals and celebrations to be a way to maintain family-of-origin values and to build and maintain successful families through the generations (Fiese et al., 2002).

2.7.7 Support network

A family's community and social support system can offer a rich, protective sense of belonging and cohesion. There is a growing appreciation for the broader view of resiliency as a complex interaction with community networks (Luthar et al., 2000). Resilient families not only attain social support from their communities, but also give back to the community (Patterson, 2002). Extended kin and social networks can interact reciprocally with families to provide information, services, respite, avenues to contribute to the welfare of others, and companionship (Seccombe, 2002). Children who perceive their community and neighbourhood as safe and satisfying have been found to benefit through improved academic

grades and fewer problem behaviours than those who see their neighbourhood as threatening (Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Particularly for families living in impoverished or isolated conditions, the availability and use of quality support systems can dramatically increase positive outcomes, such as perseverance, hope, education, and companionship (Orthner et al., 2004). If parents are not able to provide emotional support for children, other kin or mentors may step in to offer the children support, positive role models, and protection (Aronowitz & Morrison-Beedy, 2004). Healthy families have the strength to admit when they need help and are more likely to turn to extended family, friends, neighbours, community services, or counselling (Walsh, 1998). Unfortunately, there appear to be two trends diminishing a family's interaction with the community. One is the tendency to withdraw from society; the other is a lack of available services. The trends toward relocation and smaller family size in modern society have frayed kin and community connections, requiring the establishment of new forms of social support (Hanson, 2001a). Americans are more socially isolated than they were just 20 years ago, according to McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears (2006), who recently replicated a 1985 social survey. During the past two decades, adults reported a 50% reduction in intimate social ties, both within and outside the family, and 25% of the adult Americans surveyed reported that they do not have a confidant. The researchers contemplated that increased professional responsibilities, television viewing, and technology dependence may be some of the recent socio-demographic trends to blame for growing social isolation. Additionally, a recent tendency for families to become privatized, with reduced concern and responsibility for their neighbours, has been described. Toth, Brown, and Xu (2002) expressed this dichotomy as a public-private division; families feel a time pull for either private or public life, often with a perceived inability to focus on both. When a balance was made between public and private realms, community satisfaction was found to be positively correlated with family life satisfaction. It may be, however, that families are not becoming privatized, but

rather the cause of social isolation lies in the paucity of community services. Walsh (1998) cautions:

One must beware of the myth of family self-reliance that has grown out of society's individualistic strain. The major problems of families today largely reflect difficulties in adaptation to the social and economic upheavals of recent decades and the unresponsiveness of larger community and societal institutions (p. 101). All families benefit from community resources, but those with a host of other social problems can particularly benefit from external support (Staveteig & Wigton, 2005). The poor have all the personal and family problems everyone else has, along with complications of poverty, isolation, and a loss of community. Family isolation with a lack of social support can erode resilience, particularly under stressful conditions (Luthar, 1999).

When these family resilience factors are applied and family members are aware of their positive effects, they are able to contribute positively to learner academic performance. Academic success is critical to developing a healthy and positive motivational orientation toward learning in school. It is therefore worthwhile to ensure that that these factors are intertwined with learners' well-being.

2.8 Learner academic performance

Academic achievement is assessed through measuring the degree of each student's institutional learning through his/her scores (Seif, 2001). DiPerna and Elliot (2000) state that the multidimensional characteristics of a learner – including skills, attitudes, and behaviours - factor into their academic success. These characteristics can be separated and considered in one of two primary domains: academic skills or academic enablers. Academic skills are both the basic and complex skills (e.g., reading, writing, calculating, and critical thinking) needed to access and interact with content-specific knowledge. Academic enablers, however, are the

attitudes and behaviours e.g. interpersonal skills, motivation, study skills, and engagement, which a learner needs in order to take advantage of education.

Individual resources associated with academic success include cognitive abilities, motivation, and beliefs. IQ is one of the most powerful predictors of academic success. Yet academic competence also is influenced by beliefs and attitudes about school (Stevenson et al., 1993), self-perceptions about one's academic abilities (Greene & Miller, 1996), and motivations to succeed (Henderson & Dweck, 1990). Successful students typically attribute their successes to hard work and their failings to lack of effort. Students who maintain a belief that ability and performance are fixed tend to have lower achievement (Stipek & Gralinski, 1996) in comparison to children who believe that performance is a function of effort and hard work (Stevenson et al., 1993).

Despite widespread acceptance of the notion that improving student performance may have a high economic and social payoff, policy analysts in all countries have surprisingly limited hard data on which to base educational strategies for raising achievement. In South Africa this question is all the more pressing. South African students score at low levels in mathematics and language tests even when compared with students in other African countries (van der Berg and Louw, 2006). While some reasons for this poor performance may be evident, and there is widespread agreement that the main challenge in South Africa is the quality of education, there is little empirical analysis that helps policy makers understand the low level of student performance in South African schools or how to improve it.

As a first step toward an empirical approach to unpacking the factors contributing to low levels of learning in South African schools, the Human Sciences Research Council in partnership with a consortium of South African universities and researchers at the School of Education at Stanford University engaged in a small scale empirical pilot study that focuses on the role that

teacher skills and practice play in South African students' learning within the socioeconomic and administrative conditions in those schools (and South African society more broadly). In further studies more energy was focused in measuring opportunity to learn. Opportunity to learn is undoubtedly also an important factor in explaining student learning differences (Carnoy et al., 2008).

2.8.1 Course grades

Although performance on standardized tests receives the greatest attention in discussions of students' academic performance, teachers' evaluations of performance as indicated in course grades represent a common metric of student performance that often is more directly tied to the day-to-day business of teaching and learning than are annual standardized test scores. Grades serve a number of important functions. They communicate to students and parents information about students' mastery of course content. In high school, a passing grade also is the criterion for a course's contributing to accumulated credit for graduation. Finally, grades provide information for consideration in college admissions (Polloway et al., 1994).

However, as a measure of academic performance, teacher-given grades have well-known limitations. Grades are composite measures that account not only for students' content mastery but often for other factors, such as their class participation, attitudes, progress over time, and attendance. Both general and special educators are known to consider these various factors when grading, but to emphasize different factors. For example, special education teachers are less likely than general educators to consider homework or attendance to be important in grading student performance, but are more likely to consider in-class participation to be important (Blackorby et al., 2003).

2.9 Family resilience and children's learning

From the family resilience perspective, the family-school relationship becomes a collaborative one in which the educator recognizes that successful interventions to enhance children's learning depend more on tapping into a family's resources than on specific change techniques. As a result, assessment and intervention efforts are redirected from looking at how children's learning problems are caused to looking for family strengths, or resiliencies, that can be employed to resolve a child's problem. From this positive, future-oriented stance, educators and family members work together to find new possibilities for growth and to overcome impediments to children's learning and development.

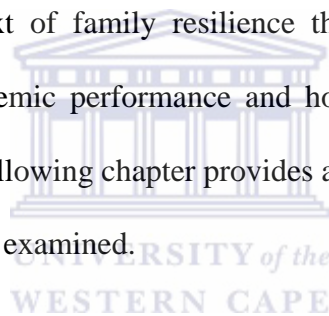
A family resilience perspective considers each interaction between home and school as an opportunity to strengthen a family's capacity to overcome adversity and successfully rear its children (Walsh, 1998, 2003). Two basic premises guide this resilience theory approach. The first premise is that while stressful crises and persistent economic, physical, and social challenges influence the whole family and its capacity to successfully rear its children, key family processes mediate the impact of these crises and the development of resilience in individual member and in the family unit as a whole. A second premise is that while family processes mediate how children are prepared to participate in school, these key family processes can be strengthened by the way the school responds to families. As the family becomes more resourceful, its ability to rear its children is enhanced. As a result, each family-school intervention also can be a preventive measure (Amatea et al., 2006).

McCubbin and McCubbin (1996) developed a Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, in which they depicted the protective role that particular family characteristics play in facilitating a family's recovery from stressful life experiences. In contrast, Conger and Conger conceptualized family resilience in terms of specific processes – such as the

development of close and supportive family ties – that evolve over time in response to a family’s specific context and stage of development. Similarly, Seccombe (2002) identified resilient families as having clear-cut expectations for their children, creating routines and celebrations, and sharing core values.

2.10 Conclusion

It can therefore be deduced that family resilience is crucial to the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood. The family operates as a system and is viewed as a structure that is constantly changing. The purpose and value of family is widely spread and touches most of human existence. This chapter aimed to examine literature regarding family resilience, viewed in the context of family resilience theory, which was the conceptual framework of this study. Academic performance and how it is enhanced through family resilience, was examined. The following chapter provides an overview of the literature, based on the variables that this research examined.



CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical insight into some of the research conducted, as well as an analytical appraisal of available literature, both internationally and locally. This review of the literature is presented in five areas. The first section of the chapter looks at middle childhood and its cognitive, social and emotional functioning. This is followed by discussions on assumptions of family life, family structure and family resilience. The final section looks at academic performance. All these concepts are discussed as an in-depth overview. This chapter then ends with a conclusion.

3.2 Middle childhood

Middle childhood is one of the main stages of human development, marked by the eruption of the first permanent molars around 6 years and androgen secretion by the adrenal glands at about 6–8 years (Bogin, 1997). In middle childhood, body growth slows considerably, usually following a small mid-growth spurt. At the same time, muscularity increases and the body starts accumulating fat (the *adiposity rebound*; Hochberg, 2008), while sex differences in body composition become more pronounced (Del Giudice et al., 2009; Wells, 2007).

In biological terms, middle childhood corresponds to human *juvenility* - a stage in which the individual is still sexually immature but no longer depends on parents for survival. Social learning in juvenility can be understood as investment in *embodied capital* - skills and knowledge that cost time and effort to acquire, but increase an individual's performance and reproductive success (Kaplan, Hill, Lancaster, & Hurtado, 2000).

3.2.1 Cognitive functioning

Social learning is universally recognized as a key evolved function of middle childhood and is enabled by a global reorganization of cognitive functioning known as the five-to-seven shift (Weisner, 1996). By age 6, the brain has almost reached its maximum size and receives a decreasing share of the body's glucose after the consumption peak of early childhood (Giedd & Rapoport, 2010; Kuzawa et al., in press). However, brain development proceeds at a sustained pace, with intensive synaptogenesis in cortical areas (grey matter) and rapid maturation of axonal connections (white matter; Lebel, Walker, Leemans, Phillips, & Beaulieu, 2008).

3.2.2 Social functioning

Researchers across multiple disciplines share an interest in examining how social and contextual assets are related to developmental outcomes, such as physical and mental health, social and emotional competencies, and subjective well-being (Oberle et al., 2011). In this regard, it has been shown that social relationships are strongly related to children's developmental health and well-being across virtually all domains of functioning - social, emotional, physical, mental, and cognitive (Luthar 2006). In addition, children during middle childhood have a need to develop competency, particularly in domains that are societally valued, such as social skills, academic achievement, music, or sports. Accordingly, children who have opportunities to develop such competencies in their family, school, and community environments show higher levels of well-being than children who do not have such opportunities (Masten & Coatsworth 1998).

Middle childhood is also a phase of fast physical growth, and children's physical health and well-being during that period is related to their nutrition (Connell et al., 2005), their sleep

quality and pattern (Smaldone et al., 2007), and their physical activities and exercise (Norris et al., 1992). Furthermore, research suggest that indicators of quality time with one's family (e.g., regular family meals; Eisenberg et al., 2004) and certain after-school activities (e.g., sports, music) are positively related to children's well-being (Donaldson & Ronan 2006). In sum, research has identified a number of social and contextual assets that are significantly related to children's overall health and well-being (cf. Theokas et al., 2005). There are numerous initiatives that aim to translate the cumulative research evidence on children's well-being and social and contextual assets into effective community practices, programs, and policies (Durlak et al., 2011). Also, a number of research initiatives attempt to develop indicator systems of children's or adolescents' well-being in order to raise awareness and visibility of the topic in public and political debate, and to allow for regional or cultural comparisons of child and adolescent well-being (Casas et al., 2011).

Early childhood behaviour problems have been shown to have detrimental and enduring effects in middle childhood and adolescence (Shaw & Gross, 2008). Several dimensions of parenting have been found to play a central role in the development of early childhood disruptive problem behaviours (Shaw et al., 2003), including both hostile and over-controlling practices (Shaw et al., 2003), and infrequent positive and proactive strategies (Gardner et al., 2007). An example of reciprocal influences is described by Shaw and Bell (1993), in which emotionally reactive young children evoke harsh parenting practices, thereby stifling children's acquisition of emotion regulation strategies, and further affecting parents' behaviour toward their children. This dynamic in families is postulated to leave young children with impaired social skills and failed individuation from parents, leading to difficulties with peer relationships (Scaramella & Leve, 2004) and acrimonious teacher–student relationships. Coercion theory has informed several behavioural parenting interventions that are effective at reducing growth of child

behaviour problems (Dishion et al., 2008). Parenting interventions initiated during the toddler period, when oppositional and aggressive behaviours increase as children become more mobile yet lack sufficient concomitant development in cognitive understanding of basic principles (e.g., gravity, electricity), specifically focus on increasing positive behaviour support to reduce the frequency of coercive parent–child interactions (Dishion et al., 2008). Given the presumed bidirectional nature of influence in the coercive cycle, early childhood interventions that address and attenuate the harsh parenting styles often elicited by negative emotional reactivity (Shaw et al., 2000) should also promote parent well-being. Developmental research attests to the impact that infant and early childhood behaviour problems have on parenting effectiveness, parent well-being, and marital functioning (Crouter & Booth, 2003).

3.2.3 Emotional functioning

The transition to middle childhood is marked by a simultaneous increase in perceptual abilities (including a transition from local to global visual processing), motor control (including the emergence of adult-like walking), and complex reasoning skills (Bjorklund, 2011; Poirel et al., 2011; Weisner, 1996). The most dramatic changes probably occur in the domain of self-regulation and executive functions: Children become much more capable of inhibiting unwanted behaviour, maintaining sustained attention, making and following plans, and so forth (Best, Miller, & Jones, 2009; Weisner, 1996). Parallel improvements take place in mentalizing (the ability to understand and represent mental states) and moral reasoning, as children become able to consider multiple perspectives and conflicting goals (Jambon & Smetana, 2014; Lagattuta, Sayfan, & Blattman, 2009).

3.3 Assumptions of family life

Across cultures and history, families are the most enduring institutions in the world. Strong families are identified by their ability to maintain a family equilibrium, drawing upon individual and joint strengths to cope effectively. The concept of family equilibrium does not imply a static pattern of family functioning. Rather, strong families are dynamic and responsive to changing needs, developmental tasks, and challenges. Strong families celebrate their successes and learn from their failures. These families have clearly defined roles, especially with regard to the parent-child relationship (Guilfoyle, Goebel, & Pai, 2011).

Families are also complex, and must be understood within numerous interdependent layers, including each individual family member, dyadic relationships, broader family functioning, and the culture in which they live (Rasbash, Jenkins, O'Connor, Tackett, & Reiss, 2011). This evolution to family resilience focuses on understanding what the family does well, the positive ways the family functions, and attempts to build on the positives to help the family improve not only its overall functioning, but also its ability for problem-solving, coping, and adjusting (Frain et al., 2008). Family resilience is grounded in family systems theory, which focuses on the entire family network and the way in which the family functions and adapts to adversity or stress (Walsh, 2003a). Walsh (2003a) noted that families have built in processes that enable the family members to handle stress, come together during a crisis, and move towards optimal adaptation.

McCubbin et al., (1996) stated that there are five assumptions of family life: (a) hardships and challenges are a part of the family life cycle; (b) families have patterns and ways of functioning to protect the family during transition and change, and to foster growth and development in all family members; (c) families have patterns of functioning to provide protection from major stressors and change; (d) families draw from and contribute to the community around them;

and (e) families work to restore order, harmony, and balance even in the midst of crisis or change. As families advance throughout the family life cycle, they are faced with multiple changes and challenges. Some of these changes or challenges can be positive such as the birth of a child or the moving out of an adult child. However, there are changes and difficult challenges that families experience throughout the family life cycle. These changes include the death of a family member (whether parent or child) or the loss of a job. The changes within a family that cause disruption and stress are known as stressors (McCubbin et al., 1996).

3.4 Family structure and well-being

Social scientists have long been concerned with the determinants of adverse social phenomena, such as interpersonal conflict and depression on individuals that have little apparent capacity to shape these outcomes. In the 1970s, the research began to shift its focus to understanding why some persons succeed in spite of adverse circumstances. This change in focus gave rise to studies on what is now referred to as ‘resilience’, which until recently has predominantly focused on characteristics of the individual. For instance, a review of the evidence shows that since the 1970s many children who were raised in deprived, adverse environments actually went on to become successful and loving individuals (Luthar et al., 2000). Research into resilience has since expanded to include various age groups and disadvantaged states, such as chronic illness (McCubbin et al., 2002), mental health issues (Jonker & Greeff, 2009), poverty and violence (Luthar, 1999) and, catastrophic life events (Clay, 2002). Included in this array is family resilience (FR) (Patterson, 2002a).

Research on the impact of family structure on child wellbeing came to the forefront of social science soon after the spike in divorce rates in the 1970s, and researchers worked to identify how children from divorced and step-families fared compared to children from intact families. As the rates of non-marital fertility have drastically increased over the past 20 years, more

recent research efforts have focused on understanding the life chances for children born to single mothers and cohabiting couples.

Older children and adolescents have greater cognitive capabilities to understand the impacts of family structure change, and they also have more extra-familial resources to rely on for support. The adjustment of younger children, however, depends heavily on their experiences within the family and the resources available to them through the family (Hetherington, 1992). For example, younger children are more likely than adolescents to have a stronger emotional bond with a new stepparent and are more likely to consider the stepparent the “real” parent (Cherlin & Furstenberg, 1994). In addition, children who have been in non-traditional families for longer periods of time have had a longer opportunity to adjust to the new family and become settled in their role in the family system (Hetherington, 1989). Thus the adjustment of both the parents and the children in non-traditional families may differ based on the developmental stage of the child during the transition to stepfamily life.

While there are clear research efforts to examine the impacts of certain family structures on child well-being, many children experience multiple types of family structure throughout their childhood. Understanding the challenges children face in each type of non-traditional family is necessary, but it is important to remember that these family types are not always experienced in isolation, and their co-occurrence has the potential to produce further challenges for children. The aggregate experience of multiple changes in family structure can produce unique challenges for children who have high levels of family instability.

The family system has perhaps the greatest impact on individual development across all stages, influencing not only individual and family life, but also that of the community in which it is found. Despite being confronted by more extreme and disruptive stresses and demands than ever before, the family system is still expected to be adaptive, competent and resilient, and to

provide a protective, growth-enhancing environment for its members (Frude, 1991). It is evident that problems and challenges, such as gross political atrocities, soaring divorce rates, diverse family forms and changing economies, do not necessarily evoke psychopathological responses. Instead, as Jenkins (1997) stated in his writing on resilience among Bosnian refugees: "what we have seen... are truly remarkable instances of human resilience and irresistibility" (p. 40).

3.4.1 Family processes

The family is one of the most important contexts for child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Family systems theory posits that family members are part of an interdependent system in which each individual impacts upon and is impacted by every other individual in the family (Minuchin, 1974). In addition, the family is comprised of subsystems between the individual members: the executive subsystem (the husband and wife), parent-child subsystems, and sibling subsystems. Families typically maintain a high degree of orderliness in the way that they interact with each other, but a disturbance or change in one family member or one subsystem impacts all other members and subsystems. In this way, a change in the executive subsystem (e.g. divorce or remarriage) impacts parent-child relationships and also sibling relationships (Minuchin, 1974). Family transitions and changes upset the homeostatic functioning of the family system, forcing families to renegotiate communication rules and boundaries. Though the renegotiation phase can be tumultuous and lengthy, adaptation to the new system at even just one level can influence adaptation among all the subsystems (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). It should be noted that the members of the family are not limited to residential members; non-residential parents (usually fathers) play a vital role in the maintenance of the family system through interactions with the residential parent and child visitation.

The systems perspective supports the notion that the structure of the family influences child wellbeing through its impact on overall family functioning. Though few studies cite family systems theory, there is a growing body of literature that examines the mediating role of family processes on family structure and child wellbeing. Most studies investigate various family processes independent of each other; family processes are typically operationalized as dyadic measures of family functioning, including parent-child relationships, the adults' relationship quality with each other, and co-parenting.

The construction and maintenance of high quality parent-child relationships is vital for child wellbeing. Positive communication, praise, parental warmth, and better monitoring are related to healthy behaviours, academic engagement, and positive emotional adjustment (Moore, Chalk, Scarpa, & Vandivere, 2002). However, non-traditional families often have to struggle to maintain high quality parent-child relationships when one of the parents is non-residential. There is a great deal of variability in the relationship quality between non-residential fathers and their children (King, 2006), and the closeness of the relationship appears to be more dependent on the quality of shared time rather than on the frequency of visitation (King, 2006). Non-residential fathers often take on the role of their child's friend and playmate (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994), though children have better adjustment when the non-residential father maintains his authoritative parenting role (Hetherington, Bridges, & Insabella, 1998). Non-residential father involvement is also dependent on whether or not the father re-partners. For instance, there is evidence to suggest that child support payments decrease once the father has a new biological child to support (Manning, Stewart & Smock, 2003), and that having a new romantic partner can decrease the level of positive engagement between the father and non-residential child (Gibson-Davis, 2008).

The relationship between the adults in the household also has the potential to impact child wellbeing. The relationship quality of a married couple even before a child is born is related to the child's attachment to the mother and dependency on the father (Howes & Markman, 1989). Children in families with high levels of marital conflict have more psychological problems than those from low-conflict (or even divorced) families (Booth & Amato, 2001). When marital quality (or relationship quality among unmarried partners) is low, parents are more likely to be depressed, anxious, or angry, and their mental health may interfere with their parenting abilities (Hetherington, 1989).

In addition to the relationship quality of the household members, co-parenting – agreements about how to parent – may be particularly important for non-traditional families in which the parents live in separate households. Indeed, co-parenting has been found to be a strong predictor of both parent and child wellbeing (Feinberg, Kan, & Hetherington, 2007). However, the co-parenting efforts of the mother and non-residential father are not well understood. In a study with divorced parents (not yet remarried), Maccoby, Dpener, & Mnookin (1990) found that the level of co-parenting between the mother and biological father is largely dependent on the father's involvement with the child, as well as the level of inter-parental hostility between the mother and non-residential father. As previously mentioned, non-residential fathers often assume the role of a friend to their child rather than a disciplinarian (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994), perhaps removing themselves from the co-parenting process entirely. This separation from the parenting practices of the residential parent can lead to parallel parenting rather than co-parenting, resulting in a lack of communication regarding common parenting strategies (Hetherington, 1998).

Although each of these processes can be individually linked to child wellbeing, they cannot be considered in isolation. Following a family systems perspective, all dyadic relationships are

influenced by other each other, and the functioning of the family as a whole is determined by the combination of the individual relationships (Minuchin, 1974). Research on stepfamilies provides an example of evidence for this perspective: following remarriage, high marital quality predicts better parent-child relationship quality (Hetherington & Jodl, 1994). While the identification of which dyadic relationships have the potential to impact child wellbeing contributes to our understanding of family processes, researchers must recognize that the overall functioning of the family is dependent on all of the relationships within the family and how they interact to impact the family as a whole.

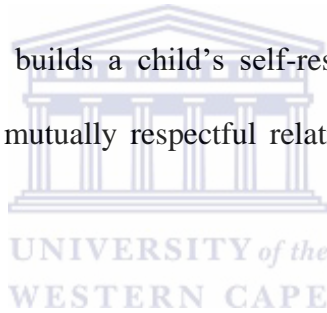
3.4.2 Positive and involved parenting

Parental involvement is the extent to which parents participate in various aspects of their children's lives, and distinguishes between negative and positive involvement. As such, researchers often refer to positive parenting and parental involvement collectively in the examination of children's aggression (Finley, Mira, & Schwartz, 2008).

Positive parenting techniques are characterised by warm, nurturing, and supportive behaviour towards children, and espouses the tenets of effective discipline, the rights of children and healthy child development (Durrant, 2007). Previous studies have found that an absence of parental warmth in addition to rigid discipline, a lack of positive parental involvement and insecure attachment increase the prognosis for later conduct problems in children (Sanders, 1999). Attachment theory emphasizes the importance of parental emotional sensitivity to effectively interpret and respond to the needs of the child. The more stable the bond between parent and child, the more likely it is that a child will regulate conduct towards others in an empathetic manner (Bowlby, 1969). Based on the positive results of previous interventions, researchers propose that positive parental involvement is very likely to serve as a protective factor against children developing aggressive behaviour (Trentacosta et al., 2008).

3.4.3 Effective discipline

In the public domain, discipline is often construed as being synonymous with punishment, power assertion, and control. However, effective discipline is a positive parenting technique aimed at shaping acceptable behaviour in children and promoting positive engagement with others (Stein & Perrin, 1998). Through effective discipline, children cultivate empathy towards others and learn self-discipline. In addition, before acting on an urge or feeling, children learn to consider the repercussions of a future action (for themselves and others) and are thus more likely to conduct themselves in a socially acceptable manner. The ability to weigh consequences, and self-regulate behaviour supports healthy relationships and social acceptance, and thereby decreases the risk of children developing conduct problems. Furthermore, effective discipline builds a child's self-respect, teaches children to respect others, and assists in building a mutually respectful relationship between parent and child (Durrant, 2007).



3.4.4 Healthy relationships

Through a mechanism psychologists call 'attachment', (Ogilvie et al., 2014) parents set the tone for their children's later relationships and begin to help them to manage their emotions and behaviour (a capacity psychologists call 'self-regulation') (Henry et al., 1996). Both of these are crucial for education (and hence for employment and income), and also for helping children to curb aggressive impulses that could lead to violence (Espelage, 2014).

Most children are aggressive and demanding at age two, but over time most learn to ask politely for what they need, to take turns and to manage emotions such as anger (Tremblay et al., 1995). Children who do not learn these skills are likely to go on to develop behavioural problems.

Learning to regulate emotions starts with parenting (Sanders et al., 2013). Parents who help toddlers to name their emotions are teaching them to recognise their internal states, which is the first step towards managing emotions. Parents who establish consistent household routines and who use non-violent approaches to discipline, such as praising behaviour that is appropriate and ignoring behaviour that is not, help children to manage their own behaviour and to find appropriate ways to get what they need and want. This is very difficult for parents who are depressed, anxious or struggling to survive.

3.5 Family resilience studies

With the evolving concept of family resilience, the focus is shifting away from identifying individual personality factors toward the crucial influence of positive relationships with family, kin, and mentors. Family resilience examines the product of family relationships (Patterson, 2002). Luthar et al (2000) argued that the dynamic process of resilience is best understood through the context of a broader, inter-relational framework. A family resilience perspective recognizes parental strengths, family dynamics, inter-relationships, and the social milieu. This strength-based approach considers family stresses and challenges not as damaging but rather as opportunities for fostering healing and growth (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988, 1996; Walsh, 2003b). All families encounter problems, or stressors. “A stressor is a demand placed on the family that produces, or has the potential to produce, changes in the family system” (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993, p. 28). The problem, demand, or loss has the possibility to either weaken family functioning and relationships or, conversely, strengthen the family as the stressor is subdued with unified action and commitment. Resilient families are strengthened through the use of resilience factors (protective and recovery) in these circumstances. McCubbin and McCubbin (1993) identified both protective and recovery factors that work synergistically and interchangeably to respond successfully to crises and challenges. Protective factors facilitate

adjustment, or the ability to maintain integrity and functioning, and to fulfil developmental tasks. When the family is challenged, recovery factors are called upon to promote the ability to adapt, or rebound, in crisis. In addition to the perceived severity of stressors, a “pile-up” of stressors can tax family protective and recovery factors, with the family relying on some more than others during various family cycle situations (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993). Family resilience entails more than surviving a crisis, but also offers the potential for growth out of adversity. Weathering a crisis together, a family can emerge more loving, stronger, and more resourceful in meeting future challenges (Walsh, 1998; White et al., 2004). The developmental progression of resilience often emerges with changing life circumstances and new stressors (Luthar et al., 2000; McCubbin et al., 2002). “The phenomenon of resilience requires attention to a range of possible psychological outcomes and not just a focus on an unusually positive one or on super-normal functioning” (Rutter, 1999, p. 120). A repertoire of possible coping factors is exchanged in resilient families. There are times when family demands exceed the family’s capabilities. When these imbalances exist, some capabilities may supersede others toward regaining equilibrium. Of course, some family processes fail to adapt with poor immediate and long-term outcomes (Patterson, 2002).

Resilience research has taken many different forms, used many means of assessment throughout, and shown many different key concepts to be of importance. Variations in the source of participant information, type of information obtained, and number of assessments used have also been shown to affect the proportion of individuals classified as resilient in studies (Kaufman, Cook, Arny, Jones, & Pittinsky, 1994). Resilience has been assessed through observable behaviour, meeting major societal or cultural expectations, the absence of psychopathology, the presence of academic or social achievements, or both presence and absence of these variables (Masten, 2001).

Despite flaws in early resilience studies, recent studies continue to corroborate the importance of similar factors such as connections to competent and caring adults in the family and community, cognitive and self-regulation skills, positive views of self, and motivation to be effective in the environment (Masten, 2001). Therefore, it is important to review previous research on resilience to search for themes and common factors to establish and guide both conceptual theories and subsequent studies.

3.5.1 Longitudinal study in children's resilience

Potentially the “founding fathers” of resilience research, Werner & Smith (1977), began a longitudinal study in 1955 with 698 babies born that year on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai. This study is unique in that Werner and Smith were able to begin their study with all pregnancies and births in an entire community. Initially this study began by looking at the children's vulnerability or susceptibility to negative developmental outcomes after exposure to serious risk factors such as prenatal stress, poverty, parental psychopathology, and disruption of their family unit (Werner & Smith).

However, as their study progressed over the next 32 years, they began looking at the roots of resiliency in children who successfully coped with risk factors to determine what factors aided in the recovery of troubled children as they moved from childhood, to adolescence, and finally into adulthood. Resilient children are able to elicit predominantly positive responses from their environment and were found to be stress-resistant whereas vulnerable children elicited negative responses from the environment even in the absence of biological stress or financial constraints (Werner & Smith).

“Resiliency in children is the capacity of those of who are exposed to identifiable risk factors to overcome those risks and avoid negative outcomes such as delinquency and behavioural

problems, psychological maladjustment, academic difficulties, and physical complications” (Rak & Patterson, 1996, p. 368). Children are not defenceless against stressful life conditions. There are many factors which can assist to ‘buffer’ (Rutter, 1985) children against stress, and which assist them in growing up to be well-adjusted and happy adults, who work well, play well, love well and expect well (Werner in Dahlin et al., 1990, p. 228).

3.5.2 Strength within families

Resiliency relates to a family’s ability to adapt to change. Some common changes that families face include parenting children from birth to adulthood, caring for an aging family member, or adjusting to parental deployment (Tusaie & Dyer, 2004). Strong families are able to maintain relative equilibrium as they manage both the more common day-to-day challenges with those that are more unique to the typical family’s experience (Landau, 2007). Researchers have identified a number of family characteristics that promote resilience to change (Bermudez, 2013). These resilience-promoting characteristics can be seen throughout the family system. Healthy couples are able to be flexible and adapt as a team to new circumstances in the event of transitions or change (Gottman, 2011). Within the parent-child relationship, healthy parents encourage children’s adaptive responses to change, are responsive to children’s distress, and access needed social and economic resources that enable the family to maintain equilibrium (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Resilience is vital for individuals and families to be able to deal with inevitable changes that will happen. Strong families will strive to be resilient in adapting to everyday changes and not just when extreme situations or traumas occur.

3.6 Academic performance

Academic performance is the multidimensional characteristics of a learner – including skills, attitudes, and behaviours – that factor into their academic success. These characteristics can

be separated and considered in one of two primary domains: academic skills or academic enablers (DiPerna & Elliot, 2000; Elliot & DiPerna, 2002). Academic skills are both the basic and complex skills (e.g., reading, writing, calculating, and critical thinking) needed to access and interact with content-specific knowledge. Academic enablers, however, are the attitudes and behaviours (e.g., interpersonal skills, motivation, study skills, and engagement) that a learner needs in order to take advantage of education.

3.6.1 Predictors of academic performance

There is an international consensus that intelligence is an important predictor of academic performance. Recent research showed that there are also non-cognitive factors, besides the general intelligence, responsible for high academic performance. A critical factor emerging from recent studies that significantly impacts the academic, social and professional adaptation has proven to be the emotional intelligence (e.g. Cherniss, Extein, Goleman, Weissberg, 2006). The results point to the emotional intelligence as a very powerful potential mediator of school outcomes (e.g. Parker et al., 2004; Marquez, Martin & Brackett, 2006; Mestre, Guil, Lopes, Salovey & Gil-Olarte, 2006). The proven benefits of high emotional intelligence in academic context are: coping with academic stress (Petrides, Frederickson & Furnham, 2004), improving overall school climate (Jensen & Freedman, 2006); predicting children's ability to learn and solve problems non-violently (Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004); decreasing school dropouts (Parker, Hogan, Eastabrook, Oke & Wood, 2006); reducing risky behaviours and increasing prosocial ones (Durlak & Weissberg, 2005 cited in Cherniss et al., 2006; Petrides, Sangareau, Furnham & Frederickson, 2006; Trinidad & Johnson, 2002). The emotional intelligence is considered crucial for the academic and later social success in pre-school childhood (Denham, 2006; Arsenio, Cooperman & Lover, 2000).

3.6.2 Importance of academic performance

Academic performance in the classroom is the end product of many other behaviours. For example, obtaining a good grade after answering examination items is the result of effective performance studying, managing goal conflicts, coordinating work with classmates, seeking additional information, negotiating with peers and faculty, avoiding counterproductive behaviours, handling finances, and structuring effective communications (e.g., Kuncel, Campbell, Hezlett, & Ones, 2001; Reilly, 1976).

During middle childhood, children progressively move from home into wider social contexts that exert important influences on their cognitive, behavioural, and socio-emotional development. In particular, the commencement of formal schooling initiates a series of new life experiences for children. School experiences encourage the development of intellectual and interpersonal competencies, and introduce the child to new social roles wherein status is conferred based upon competence and performance (Higgins & Parsons, 1983).

Research on children who experience difficulties with learning early in school has shown that these children are at increased risk for behavioural, academic, and psychiatric difficulties contemporaneously and subsequently – such children are also particularly likely to be retained in a grade and to later drop out of school prior to the completion of high school (Alexander, Entwisle & Horsey, 1997). The frequent feelings of frustration and incompetence that accompany a child's lack of success early in her school career may coalesce over time into a negative pattern of adaptation towards schooling (Cairns et al., 1989).

3.6.3 How family influences academic performance

The nature of the relationship between home and school- microsystems has been examined for decades using a unidirectional model, wherein home environment characteristics are analysed

for their effects on school-related outcomes. Because of the abundance of work in this area, scholars of economics, sociology, education, and psychology now largely agree that parental education, socioeconomic status, and family structure have main effects on the academic performance of youth (Reardon, 2011) and an aggregated effect on system-level school performance indicators, such as state-mandated standardized test scores (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). In other words, students who experience more family related advantages and resources at home tend to perform better academically, and schools that enrol higher proportions of these students tend to be deemed successful by state accountability standards.

Current theory and a growing body of literature support the basic concept that as family problems increase, the risk for a series of negative outcomes substantially increases for children (Brooks-Gunn, Klebanov, Liaw, & Duncan, 1995). Negative outcomes for these children can range from behaviour problems and poor academic achievement to drug use, psychiatric disorders and suicide (Myers, Taylor, Arrington, & Richardson, 1992). Regardless of the source of negative child outcomes, there is a body of research supporting the concept of resilience in children. Resilience represents the ability of children to exhibit competencies and successes despite the presence of stressful life events or circumstances (Werner, 1995). Furthermore, research has supported the notion that resilience can be enhanced by promoting positive family functioning, supporting family strengths, and identifying and intervening in family problems (Lester, McGrath, Garcia-Coll, Brem, Sullivan, & Mattis, 1995).

A successful transition into school which supports early school achievement is a very important condition of further success for children. Children who enter school and perform poorly from the beginning, academically or socially, tend to continue having negative experiences in school (Gillespie, 2014). However, although the mechanisms by which early school competence

contributes to positive developmental outcomes are still being investigated, it seems that whatever the mechanism, early school performance tends to predict later success (Durlak, 1997).

Academic success during middle childhood is critical to successful developmental trajectory through this period into adolescence precisely because academic success is critical to developing a healthy, positive view of one's competence and a positive motivational orientation toward learning in school (Dryfoos, 1994). Research has indicated that school-family-community partnerships improve school programs and school climate, increase parents' skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and the community, and improve children's chances of success in school and life (Epstein, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002)

3.7 Conclusion

Research on the literature of middle childhood regards this as a unique developmental phase in life which constitutes many challenges. Successful experiences in a wide range of settings help to give a child a healthy, positive view of his or her competence, and a positive attitude toward learning and engagement in life's activities and challenges. Family resilience has one of the main effects on the academic performance of learners in middle childhood. Bearing in mind how important successful experiences can be to children of these ages may help the leaders and staff of out-of-school programs to maximize the benefits their programs provide. The following chapter provides insight into the methodology used in this study.



CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct the present study to accomplish the specific aims and objectives as described in Chapter 1. A detailed explanation is provided for the research design. It also provides an explanation of how the sample was recruited and presents a full description of the sample. Further, this chapter presents the instruments used to collect the data for analysis and a review of their psychometric properties. It also presents the pilot study conducted before undertaking the main study. The data collection and analysis procedures are also discussed. Lastly, the ethical considerations are discussed.

4.2 Aim and objectives of the study

Aim of the study

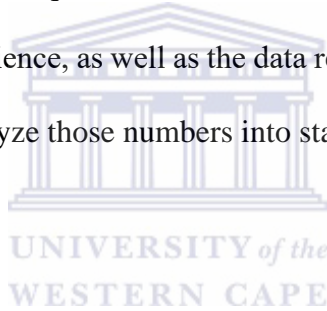
The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived family resilience and the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

The objectives of this study were to:

- Determine the perception of family resilience of learners in the phase of middle childhood;
- Assess the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood;
- Examine the relationship between and predictive effects of family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

4.3 Methodological approach

Overall this study utilised a quantitative methodology in order to investigate the nature of the relationship between family resilience (and its factors) and academic performance of children in middle childhood. Quantitative research, according to Creswell (2008), is an inquiry approach, useful for describing trends and explaining the relationship among variables. In quantitative research, the researcher decides what to study; asks specific, narrow questions; collects quantifiable data from participants; analyzes these numbers using statistics; and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2010). The reason for this approach is that it suited the nature of the data collection amongst the learners at the various schools. The quantitative research enabled the researcher to assemble all the info relating to family resilience, as well as the data relating to those students' academic performance and was able to analyze those numbers into statistics.



4.4 Research design

A research design is the plan and procedure for research that spans the decisions, from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. The selection of a research design is also based on the nature of the research problems, the researcher's personal experiences and the audiences for the study (Creswell, 2008). This study used a cross-sectional, correlational research design. A cross-sectional study observes a phenomenon at a particular period of time (Gray, 2009), and one advantage thereof is that it can reveal associations among variables. Correlation research addresses questions about the relationship between two or more variables and the extent to which they co-vary (Arthur, Waring, Coe & Hedges, 2012). When an association is measured numerically, a correlation coefficient is obtained that gives the strength and direction of the relationship between these variables (Gray, 2009). Research variables are concepts that vary in ways that can be observed, recorded and

measured (Miley, O'Melia & DuBois, 2009). Using the cross-sectional, correlation research design allowed the researcher to reveal the associations between these variables.

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived family resilience and the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood. Thus a correlational design was appropriate as there were scores (derived by answers on questionnaires) on these variables from the same participants and statistical relationships were examined. This design is also cross-sectional because a subset of participants from the population in the Metro Central District was selected at one point in time (Salkind, 2010).

4.5 Population and sample

Sampling can be defined as selecting the elements to be observed (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The type of sampling which was used in this study was convenient sampling. Convenience sampling includes participants who are readily available and agree to participate in a study (Fink, 1995). Three primary schools were conveniently selected, as they were geographically within easy reach of the researcher.

The population refers to the group (of people) about whom researchers want to draw conclusions (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This study focused on the Metro Central District within the Western Cape Education Department, which comprises of 68 primary schools (Grade 1 – Grade 7). The sampling frame for this research was Grade 6 learners from the 2015 registered list of learners of the three primary schools enlisted within the Penlyn Estate area. Together, these schools have approximately 285 learners. The population of this research study comprised of 194 Grade 6-learners. The chosen area was geographically convenient for the researcher and the reason for this category of learners is that their ages spanned the phase of middle childhood. Class lists of all the learners at the 3 schools were requested, so that the

researcher could keep track of which learners participated in the actual study, and also for the purpose of measuring their academic performance. All Grade 6 learners were provided with information sheets and consent forms for parents, as well as information sheets and assent forms for participants. Their class teachers explained the purpose of the study to them and they were requested to ask permission from parents/guardians to participate in the study. The learners who obtained written permission from parents participated in the study.

4.6 Data collection instrument

Structured questionnaires were given to the participants to complete. The instrument that were used was: The Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS), together with a section for completion of demographics. The questionnaires were only printed in English.

4.6.1. The Family Resilience Assessment Scale

Family Resilience is conceptualized as behavioural patterns and functional competencies that help families negotiate and cope with crisis and hardships (McCubbin et al., 1998). For this study family resilience serves as an independent variable. To measure family resilience, this study utilized the Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS) developed by Tucker Sixbey (2005) using Walsh's (2006) theoretical framework of family resilience. The measure uses a 4-point Likert Scale that ranges from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The FRAS contains six subscales. The overall internal consistency of the FRAS according to Tucker is $\alpha = 0.96$.

4.6.2 Academic performance measurement

Permission for obtaining the 2015 mid-year results of the participants were requested by the various schools and principals granted the researcher access to this information. Only the researcher and supervisors had access to the names and results of each student. Academic

performance was measured utilising the results provided by the teachers of the participating learners. The mean of the learning areas covered in Grade 6 (English, Afrikaans, Mathematics, Natural Science, History, Geography, Combined Social Science, Life Skills) were calculated and each participant's results were recorded. This was then correlated with the scores obtained on the Family Resilience Assessment Scale questionnaire using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) V23.

4.7 Data collection

The research was conducted after receiving permission to conduct the study from the University of the Western Cape. Further permission was sought for at the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). The principals of the various selected schools were contacted to get permission to inform parents of participants of the study and to administer questionnaires. Letters were sent home with the children explaining the purpose, aims and objectives of the study (see Appendices III & IV) as well as consent form to be signed (see Appendices V & VI). A date and time for the administration of the main study by the researcher were arranged with the principals of the respective schools. The researcher proceeded to administer the questionnaires at the located venues (viz. school classrooms that were provided). The purpose for the study was stipulated on a cover sheet, followed by a demographics page, which had to be completed. These were provided by the researcher and the questionnaire procedure was carefully explained to all 194 participants respectively (classes of about 35 – 40 learners at a time completed the study). The completed questionnaires were then collected. It was re-iterated in all correspondence that participation is voluntary and that all information shared would remain confidential.

4.7.1 Pilot study

The term pilot study is used in two different ways in social science research. It can refer to so-called feasibility studies which are “small scale version[s], or trial run[s], done in preparation for the major study” (Polit et al., 2001: 467). However, a pilot study can also be the pre-testing or ‘trying out’ of a particular research instrument (Baker 1994: 182-3). One of the advantages of conducting a pilot study is that it might give advance warning about where the main research project could fail, where research protocols may not be followed, or whether proposed methods or instruments are inappropriate or too complicated. In the words of De Vaus (1993: 54) “Do not take the risk. Pilot test first.”

The purpose of a pilot study was to understand from a qualitative perspective if children were able to understand the Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS) because it was not developed with children in mind. Other factors which emerged were: time taken for the participants to complete the questionnaire, language understanding and comprehension of questions. Changes were made because the learners did not understand the level of some of the vocabulary used in the questionnaire. Together with my supervisor we reviewed the problem areas and changed the wording to make it more suitable for children to understand.

Thereafter, telephonic contact was established with the principals of the schools. A date and time for the meeting with the principal to inform them of the study was set up. Information sheets (see Appendix IV) and consent forms (see Appendix VI) that needed to be completed by the parents regarding the study, were left with the principals of the respective schools. Once the consent forms had been collected by the respective teachers, a date and time was set as to when the data collection would be conducted at the particular schools.

The questionnaire was administered to a group that is similar in age and background to the sample. Twenty-seven middle childhood male and female learners from one school was used

in a pilot study to understand from a qualitative perspective if children could understand the Family Resilience Assessment Scale. It was also used to establish any challenges or limitations that may occur with this age group. The participants were informed of the study and were allowed to ask questions or concerns that they had. The learners were given consent forms (see Appendix V) that needed to be signed before administering the questionnaires, if they volunteered to partake in the study. Learners completed the questionnaires within 20 – 30 minutes.

4.7.1.1 Challenges identified during the pilot study

During the pilot study it was evident that some of the wording was too complex for middle childhood learners to comprehend. In the ‘demographics’ section, some learners did not understand the meaning of ‘siblings’ and that had to be simplified by saying ‘brothers and sisters’. In spite of the questionnaire’s being read through to the learners, a number of the questions still needed explanation – such as: “We can blow off steam at home without upsetting someone”. It had to be explained that this meant expressing themselves (participants i.e.) in whichever way they felt was appropriate at any given time, and that their behaviour would not offend anyone within the family (see Table 4.1).

4.7.1.2 Changes made to the instrument

Because of difficulties encountered, certain questions in the Family Resilience Assessment Scale had to be reviewed so that learners could comprehend its meaning. The following changes were then made:

Table 4.1 Changes made to the measuring instrument

| <u>FROM</u> | <u>TO</u> |
|--|--|
| 1. Our family structure is flexible to deal with the unexpected. | Our family is flexible to deal with unexpected events eg. moving home. |
| 5. We accept that problems occur unexpectedly. | We accept that problems which we do not expect, can happen. |
| 8. We are adaptable to demands placed on us as a family. | We are flexible/able to cope with demands placed on us as a family. |
| 14. We can ask for clarification if we do not understand each other. | We can ask for an explanation if we do not understand each other. |
| 16. We can blow off steam at home without upsetting someone. | We can show our feelings at home without upsetting someone. |
| 17. We can compromise when problems come up. | We can “make a deal” with each other when problems come up. |
| 25. We consult with each other about decisions. | We talk to each other about decisions we need to make. |
| 33. We feel taken for granted by family members. | We feel taken advantage of by family members. |
| 42. We participate in church activities. | We take part in church/mosque activities. |
| 44. We seek advice from religious advisors. | We seek advice from religious advisors, such as priests, imams etc. |
| 53. We understand communication from other family members. | We understand how other family members talk to each other. |

The table above was extracted from the original Family Resilience Assessment Scale (Sixbey, 2005), which consists of 54 items. This scale was originally intended for adult participants. The items listed were reviewed and restructured to make meanings easier to comprehend for the participants of the main study. Please see the revised questionnaire attached (see Appendix II).

4.8 Data collection for the main study

Collecting data, according to Creswell (2009), means identifying and selecting participants for a study, obtaining their permission to conduct the study and gathering information by asking questions or observing behaviour. Once the pilot study was completed, i.e. both the data collection and the analyses of the research process and the questionnaire, the results of this process informed the process for the main study. The data for the main study was collected at the same and different schools to those of the pilot study. As with the pilot study, the same process of requesting permission was followed: participants were informed of the study and were allowed to ask questions or concerns that they had. The learners were given consent forms (see Appendix V) that needed to be signed before administering the questionnaires, if they volunteered to partake in the study. Participants, their parents and teachers were informed about the study. The participants were given the opportunity to decide on voluntarily participating in the study, after which the questionnaires were dispensed to groups of learners. As with the pilot study, these groups consisted of 30 to 40 learners at a time, in a class room setting within the limitations of the school time table. Completion of the questionnaires took approximately 20 - 30 minutes.

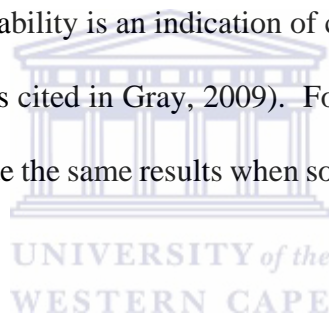
4.9 Data analysis

Analysing and interpreting data involves drawing conclusions from the data collected and presenting the findings in tables, figures and pictures, to verify the conclusions and provide answers to the researcher's research questions (Creswell, 2009). Descriptive statistics are used to describe or summarize a set of data, while inferential statistics are used to make inferences from the sample chosen to a larger population (Gray, 2009). The key variables in this research study were the relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

The raw data collected from the research conducted was entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) V23. The data was coded, cleaned, checked for errors and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics include frequencies and means, while inferential statistics include a Pearson correlations and linear regression analysis. Regression analysis is a quantitative research method that is used when the study involves modelling and analysing several variables, where the relationship includes a dependent variable and one or more independent variables to predict effects (McGrath, 2011).

4.10 Reliability and validity

The test-retest method was implemented in the pilot study, which assisted in measuring the reliability of the instrument. Reliability is an indication of consistency between two measures of the same thing (Black, 1999, as cited in Gray, 2009). For the research tool to be classified as reliable, it is expected to provide the same results when something was measured at different times.



Validity applies to particular interpretations of tests, assessments, questionnaires or other data collection instruments (Arthur et al., 2012). According to David (2010), it is the degree to which whatever is measured is what the researcher intended. To ensure validity, a research instrument must measure whatever it was intended to measure. To achieve validity, the research instrument subject area and the operationally defined subject areas must match exactly (Gray, 2009). The Family Resilience Assessment Scale has been used. The Cronbach Alpha scores of this research for the various subscales were as follows: Family Communication and Problem Solving .90; Utilizing Social and Economic Resources .77; Maintaining Positive Outlook .71; Ability of Make Meaning of Adversity .37; Family Spirituality .65; Family Connectedness .28.

4.11 Ethics statement

Permission to conduct the study was requested from the Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape. Once ethical clearance was received, permission to collect the data was requested from the Western Cape Department of Education in order to gain access to the various schools. The following ethical guidelines were followed in the pilot study and the main study:

- (i) The purpose of the study was explained to the participants and their parents (see Appendix III & IV);
- (ii) Written Informed consent was requested from the parents of the participants (see Appendix III) and Assent forms were completed by the participants before participation (see Appendix IV);
- (iii) participation in the study was voluntary;
- (iv) participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study, at any time, without prejudice;
- (v) participants were treated with respect and dignity;
- (vi) all questionnaires were coded with numbers to ensure anonymity of participants;
- (vii) all information was handled confidentially and only used for the benefit of the study;
- (viii) the questionnaires were collected and kept in a secure place;
- (ix) there was no known risks involved with participation in the study; and

- (x) the research findings and feedback were disseminated to the various schools that assisted in the research study

4.12 Conclusion

The chapter provided the methodological design of the study. A cross-sectional correlational design was used to achieve the main aim and objectives of the study. More specifically, the design used was a systematic investigation of relationships among family resilience and academic performance in the phase of middle childhood. The chapter provided information with regard to the various stages of the research process such as sampling, data collection and data analysis. This chapter has outlined the research pilot study, the main study, and the changes made as a result of the pilot study. The results of the research follow in the next chapter.



CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the analysis for this study. The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) V23. This chapter presents the results as (1) descriptive information regarding knowledge of family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood, (2) the relationships between and the predictive effects of family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

The following is a coding guide used to analyze the data:

| Abbreviation | Variable |
|--------------|--|
| FCPS | Family communication and problem solving |
| USER | Utilizing social and economic resources |
| MPO | Maintaining positive outlook |
| AMMA | Ability to make meaning of adversity |
| FS | Family spirituality |
| FC | Family connectedness |

5.2 Overview

The overview of the analysis lies within the aims and objectives given below:

5.2.1 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between perceived family resilience and the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

5.2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the perception of family resilience of learners in the phase of middle childhood;
- Assess the academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood;
- Examine the relationship between and predictive effects of family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

The hypothesis of the study based on the aims and objectives in Chapter 1, proposed that there is a significant predictive relationship between family resilience (family communication and problem-solving, maintaining a positive outlook, making meaning of adversity, family spirituality, family connectedness and utilising social and economic resources) and learners' academic performance in the phase of middle childhood.

5.3 Internal consistency

The study used one instrument to measure the variables under study. This was the Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS) as developed by Sixbey (2005). The FRAS was designed

as a family measure for administration with one adult family member. However, in this study, it was restructured to be administered to children. The FRAS was adapted on the basis of the pilot study. The internal consistency is indicated by Cronbach alphas in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Internal consistency

| Variables | Alpha |
|--|--------------|
| Family communication and problem solving | .90 |
| Utilizing social and economic resources | .77 |
| Maintaining positive outlook | .71 |
| Ability to make meaning of adversity | .37 |
| Family spirituality | .65 |
| Family connectedness | .28 |
| Total Scale | .91 |

Cronbach Alpha coefficients above .75 are deemed to be acceptable, while .6 is considered to be moderately acceptable (Anastasi, 1982). The alphas show a good reliability of the instruments used to measure the variables. Cronbach Alpha coefficients, Family Communication and Problem Solving (.90) and Utilizing social and economic resources (.77) showed good coefficients, whilst ability to make meaning of adversity (.37) and Family connectedness (.28) did not show good coefficients.

Table 5.2 Demographic information of participants

| Variables | | N = 194 | % |
|---|---------------|---------|------|
| Gender | Male | 72 | 37.1 |
| | Female | 122 | 62.9 |
| Age | 11 | 77 | 39.7 |
| | 12 | 104 | 53.6 |
| | 13 | 12 | 6.2 |
| | 14 | 1 | .5 |
| Grade | VI | 194 | 100 |
| Race | Coloured | 189 | 97.4 |
| | Black/African | 1 | .5 |
| | White | | |
| | Indian | 4 | 2.1 |
| Home language | Afrikaans | 80 | 41.2 |
| | English | 114 | 58.8 |
| | isiXhosa | | |
| | Other | | |
| I live with | Mother | 176 | 90.7 |
| | Father | 142 | 73.2 |
| | Grandparent | 78 | 40.2 |
| | Uncle/Aunt | 52 | 26.8 |
| | Sibling | 161 | 83 |
| Is there a child with a disability living in your home? | Yes | 6 | 3.1 |
| | No | 188 | 96.9 |

Table 5.2 presents an overview of the demographic profile of the 194 participants in this study. Demographic information includes gender, age, grade, race, home-language, “I live with” and “Is there a child with disability living in your home”?

The results show that the majority of the participants were female [122 (62.9%)]. All the participants were in Grade VI. Of the participants 189 (97.4%) identified themselves (according to terminology used by the previous government to separate individuals) as “Coloured”, 1 (.5%) as “Xhosa” and 4 (2%) as “Indian”. No “Whites” participated in the study. There were 114 (58.8%) English-speaking participants and 80 (41.2%) were Afrikaans-speaking. The majority of the participants 176 (90.7%) live with their mother, whilst 142 (73.2%) live with their father, 78 (40.2%) live with their grandparent, [52 (26.8%)] live with an aunt/uncle and 161 (83%) live with siblings. Only [6 (3.1%)] participants live with a child who has a disability and 188 (96.9%) do not have anyone with a disability living with them.

5.4 Perception of family resilience

Resilience - the ability to withstand and rebound from disruptive life challenges - has become an important concept in mental health theory, research, and practice over recent decades. It involves dynamic processes fostering positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity (Bonanno, 2004; Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2001).

This section presents the Means (*M*) and Standard Deviations (*SD*) of the subscales of the Family Resilience Assessment Scale, considered the most important dimensions to determine family resilience.

Table 5.3 Subscale on Family Communication and Problem Solving (FCPS)

| Item | N | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|--|-----|----------|-----------|
| 1 Our family is flexible to deal with unexpected events eg. moving home. | 194 | 3.07 | .88 |
| 6 We all have input into major family decisions | 194 | 3.03 | .79 |
| 7 We are able to work through pain and come to an understanding | 194 | 3.23 | .80 |
| 8 We are flexible/able to cope with demands placed on us as a family. | 194 | 3.11 | .76 |
| 9 We are open to new ways of doing things in our family | 194 | 3.25 | .67 |
| 10 We are understood by other family members | 194 | 3.36 | .71 |
| 14 We can ask for an explanation if we do not understand each other. | 194 | 3.31 | .70 |
| 15 We can be honest and direct with each other in our family | 194 | 3.29 | .77 |
| 16 We can show our feelings at home without upsetting someone. | 194 | 2.92 | .87 |
| 17 We can “make a deal” with each other when problems come up. | 194 | 3.22 | .66 |
| 18 We can deal with family differences in accepting a loss | 194 | 3.20 | .79 |
| 20 We can question the meaning behind messages in our family | 194 | 3.21 | .73 |
| 23 We can talk about the way we communicate in our family | 194 | 3.08 | .83 |
| 24 We can work through difficulties as a family | 194 | 3.18 | .78 |
| 25 We talk to each other about decisions we need to make. | 194 | 3.22 | .73 |
| 26 We define problems positively to solve them | 194 | 3.19 | .61 |
| 27 We discuss problems and feel good about the solutions | 194 | 3.26 | .67 |

| | | | | |
|----|--|-----|------|-----|
| 28 | We discuss things until we reach a solution | 194 | 3.22 | .72 |
| 29 | We feel free to express our opinions | 194 | 3.19 | .78 |
| 30 | We feel good giving time and energy to our family | 194 | 3.41 | .71 |
| 40 | We learn from each other's mistakes | 194 | 3.44 | .59 |
| 41 | We mean what we say to each other in our family | 194 | 3.22 | .76 |
| 46 | We share responsibility in the family | 194 | 3.47 | .64 |
| 48 | We tell each other how much we care for one another | 194 | 3.29 | .73 |
| 52 | We try new ways of working with problems | 194 | 3.25 | .68 |
| 53 | We understand how other family members talk to each other. | 194 | 3.18 | .72 |
| 54 | We work to make sure family members are not emotionally or physically hurt | 194 | 3.40 | .79 |

Average total percentage scores for the Family Resilience Assessment Scale (N=194)

Responses were on a Likert scale of Strongly Agree = 4, Agree=3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1

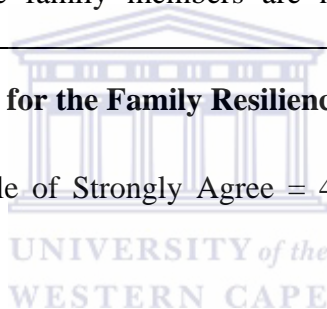


Table 5.3 illustrates the scoring of Family Communication and Problem Solving. The majority of participants indicated the following as the most prevalent items: *'We share responsibility in the family'* ($M = 3.47, SD = .64$); this was followed by *'We learn from each other's mistakes'* ($M = 3.44, SD = .59$); the least prevalent responses were: *'We all have input into major family decisions'* ($M = 3.03, SD = .79$) and *'We can show our feelings at home without upsetting someone'* ($M = 2.92, SD = .87$).

In terms of the aim and objectives of the current study, it is evident from the table above that families that work together responsibly in accomplishing tasks and where there are communication aspects and learning from each other, are able to create a sense of academic achievement within the learner in the phase of middle childhood.

Table 5.4 Utilizing Social and Economic Resources (USER)

| | Item | n | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----|--|-----|----------|-----------|
| 11 | We ask neighbours for help and assistance | 194 | 2.90 | .90 |
| 19 | We can depend upon people in this community | 194 | 2.69 | .97 |
| 31 | We feel people in this community are willing to help in an emergency | 194 | 3.09 | .85 |
| 32 | We feel secure living in this community | 194 | 2.76 | 1.1 |
| 38 | We know there is community help if there is trouble | 194 | 2.99 | .90 |
| 39 | We know we are important to our friends | 194 | 3.34 | .75 |
| 43 | We receive gifts and favours from neighbours | 194 | 3.05 | .90 |
| 49 | We think this is a good community to raise children | 194 | 2.72 | 1.1 |

Table 5.4 presents the scoring of Utilizing Social and Economic Resources. The majority of participants indicated '*We know we are important to our friends*' ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .75$); following that was '*We feel people in this community are willing to help in an emergency*' ($M = 3.09$, $SD = .85$), indicating the highest mean-scores. These were the responses on the last two items, showing the lowest mean-scores: '*We think this is a good community to raise children*' ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.1$); and '*We can depend upon people in this community*' ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .97$). Whilst families are able to thrive socially amongst themselves and work out problems within the home, problems within the community are likely to cause difficulties.

Table 5.5 Maintaining a Positive Outlook (MPO)

| | Item | n | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----|---|-----|----------|-----------|
| 13 | We believe we can handle our problems | 194 | 3.24 | .69 |
| 21 | We can solve major problems | 194 | 3.16 | .78 |
| 22 | We can survive if another problem comes up | 194 | 3.04 | .87 |
| 34 | We feel we are strong in facing big problems | 194 | 3.21 | .77 |
| 36 | We have the strength to solve our problems | 194 | 3.29 | .73 |
| 51 | We trust things will work out even in difficult times | 194 | 3.38 | .73 |

Table 5.5 presents the scoring for Maintaining a Positive Outlook. Most participants had prevalent responses in the following two items by saying ‘*We trust things will work out even in difficult times*’ ($M = 3.38, SD = .73$); following that item was ‘*We have the strength to solve our problems*’ ($M = 3.29, SD = .73$); and least prevalent responses were in the following two items: ‘*We can solve major problems*’ ($M = 3.16, SD = .78$); and finally ‘*We can survive if another problem comes up*’ ($M = 3.04, SD = .87$).

Table 5.6 Family Connectedness

| | Item | n | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----|---|-----|----------|-----------|
| 2 | Our friends value us and who we are | 194 | 3.36 | .66 |
| 33 | We feel taken advantage of by family members.* | 194 | 2.13 | .97 |
| 37 | We keep our feelings to ourselves * | 194 | 2.61 | .89 |
| 45 | We seldom listen to family members' concerns or problems * | 194 | 2.51 | .93 |
| 47 | We show love and affection for family members | 194 | 3.59 | .66 |
| 50 | We think we should not get too involved with people in community * | 194 | 2.71 | .96 |

Table 5.6 presents the scoring for Family Connectedness. Most prevalent responses were: '*We show love and affection for family members*' ($M = 3.59, SD = .66$); this was followed by '*Our friends value us and who we are*' ($M = 3.36, SD = .66$); the final two items were responded least prevalently in the following manner: '*We seldom listen to family members' concerns or problems*' ($M = 2.51, SD = .93$) and '*We feel taken advantage of by family members*' ($M = 2.13, SD = .97$).

Table 5.7 Family Spirituality (FS)

| | Item | n | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|----|---|-----|----------|-----------|
| 12 | We attend church/synagogue/mosque services | 194 | 3.61 | .60 |
| 35 | We have faith in a supreme being | 194 | 3.67 | .55 |
| 42 | We take part in church/mosque activities. | 194 | 3.51 | .71 |
| 44 | We seek advice from religious advisors, such as priests, imams etc. | 194 | 3.35 | .75 |

Table 5.7 presents the scoring for Family Spirituality. The following items had the most responses: ‘*We have faith in a supreme being*’ ($M = 3.67, SD = .55$); this was followed by ‘*We attend church/synagogue/mosque services*’ ($M = 3.61, SD = .60$); then came ‘*We take part in church/mosque activities*’ ($M = 3.51, SD = .71$); finally, ‘*We seek advice from religious advisors, such as priests, imams etc.*’ ($M = 3.35, SD = .75$).

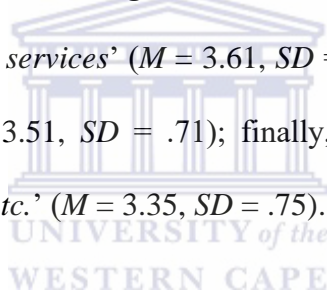


Table 5.8 Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity (AMMA)

| | Item | n | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|---|-----|----------|-----------|
| 3 | The things we do for each other make us feel a part of the family | 194 | 3.34 | .72 |
| 4 | We accept stressful events as a part of life | 194 | 3.16 | .76 |
| 5 | We accept that problems which we do not expect, can happen. | 194 | 3.25 | .72 |

Table 5.8 presents the scoring for Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity. The most prevalent responses were to the following items: ‘*The things we do for each other make us feel part of the family*’ ($M = 3.34, SD = .72$); this was followed by ‘*We accept that problems which we do*

not expect, can happen’ ($M = 3.25, SD = .72$); and lastly: *‘We accept stressful events as a part of life’* ($M = 3.16, SD = .76$).

Table 5.9 Table of the mean scores for the variables of family resilience

| Descriptive statistics | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|--------------------|
| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Standard Deviation |
| FCPS | 194 | 1.63 | 4.04 | 3.23 | .39 |
| USER | 194 | 1.38 | 4.00 | 2.94 | .58 |
| MPO | 194 | 1.67 | 4.00 | 3.12 | .48 |
| AMMA | 194 | 2.00 | 4.00 | 3.26 | .49 |
| FS | 194 | 2.25 | 4.00 | 3.54 | .46 |
| FC | 194 | 1.83 | 4.00 | 2.83 | .45 |
| Academic Performance | 194 | 13.86 | 95.29 | 62.00 | 15.05 |

Table 5.9 presents the scoring for the variables of family resilience. The following items had the most prevalent responses: *‘Family Spirituality’* ($M = 3.54, SD = .46$); this was followed by *‘Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity’* ($M = 3.26, SD = .49$). The least prevalent responses were in the following two items: *‘Utilizing Social and Economic Resources’* ($M = 2.94, SD = .58$) and *‘Family Connectedness’* ($M = 2.83, SD = .45$)

5.5 Academic Achievement

This study is based on existing data received from the schools where research was conducted. Provision was made for the 2015 midyear results of all the participants in the study ($N = 194$).

Table 5.10 Percentage scores for the Academic achievement for the total sample (N=194).

| Variables | N | Minimum | Maximum | M | SD |
|-------------------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| English | 194 | 16 | 93 | 65.97 | 12.79 |
| Afrikaans | 194 | 6 | 94 | 58.54 | 18.35 |
| Math | 194 | 8 | 95 | 51.92 | 19.54 |
| Natural Science | 194 | 14 | 98 | 62.88 | 19.15 |
| History | 194 | 5 | 100 | 66.66 | 19.04 |
| Geography | 194 | 5 | 100 | 61.05 | 18.83 |
| Combined Social Science | 194 | 5 | 100 | 64.29 | 17.27 |
| Life Skills | 194 | 27 | 88 | 66.98 | 12.58 |
| Academic performance | 194 | 14 | 95 | 62.00 | 15.05 |

The results in Table 5.10 present the average scores for Academic Achievement during Midyear results of the 2015 academic school year. The results indicate that participants scored the highest for *Life Skills* ($M = 66.98$, $SD = 12.58$); this was followed by *History* ($M = 66.66$, $SD = 19.04$); *English* ($M = 65.97$, $SD = 12.79$); *Combined Social Sciences* ($M = 64.29$, $SD = 17.27$); *Natural Science* ($M = 62.88$, $SD = 19.15$); *Afrikaans* ($M = 58.54$, $SD = 18.35$); and the lowest scores were attained for *Mathematics* ($M = 51.92$, $SD = 19.54$)

5.6 The relationship between the variables

This section provides the results of the relationship between the variables. A correlation (Table 5.11) was first conducted to determine the relationship between the subscales of family

resilience. This correlation was then followed by separate regression analyses (Table 5.12) to determine whether there is a relationship between family resilience and academic performance.

Table 5.11 Relationship between family resilience and academic performance

| Variables | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|-----------|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Family Communication & Problem Solving | - | | | | | |
| 2 | Utilizing Social & Economic Resources | .48** | | | | | |
| 3 | Maintaining a Positive Outlook | .74** | .56** | | | | |
| 4 | Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity | .61** | .21** | .51** | | | |
| 5 | Family Spirituality | .54** | .23** | .35** | .26** | | |
| 6 | Family Connectedness | .42** | .21** | .28** | .32** | .20** | |
| 7 | Academic Performance | .31** | .29** | .41** | .37** | .24** | .39** |

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results in Table: 5.11 show that there is a significant positive relationship between academic performance and family resilience ($r = .31, p < 0.01$). There were significant positive relationships to be found between Academic Performance and (i) Utilising Social and Economic Resources ($r = .29, p < 0.01$); (ii) Maintaining a Positive Outlook ($r = .41, p < 0.01$); (iii) Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity ($r = .37, p < 0.01$); (iv) Family Spirituality ($r = .24, p < 0.01$); (v) Family Connectedness ($r = .39, p < 0.01$).

Table 5.12 Regression analyses predicting academic performance

| Family Resilience | <i>B</i> | <i>SE b</i> | β | <i>T</i> | <i>P</i> |
|--|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Constant (Academic Performance) | -9.41 | | | | |
| Family Communication and Problem Solving | -13.56 | 4.39 | -.35 | -3.09 | .002* |
| Utilizing Social and Economic Resources | 3.34 | 1.98 | .13 | 1.68 | .09 |
| Maintaining a Positive Outlook | 10.28 | 3.07 | .33 | 3.35 | .001* |
| Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity | 7.81 | 2.43 | .25 | 3.21 | .002* |
| Family Spirituality | 4.97 | 2.38 | .15 | 2.09 | .04* |
| Family Connectedness | 10.43 | 2.26 | .31 | 4.62 | .000* |

Note Academic Performance: $\Delta R^2 = 0.29$

Table 5.11 presents the results for a linear regression analyses. Academic performance was significantly predicted by (i) Family Communication and Problem Solving ($\beta = -.35, p = \leq .002$); (ii) Maintaining a Positive Outlook ($\beta = .33, p = .001$); (iii) Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity ($\beta = .25, p = .002$); (iv) Family Connectedness ($\beta = .31, p = .000$); (v) Family Spirituality ($\beta = .15, p = .04$).

The model explains a 29% variance for academic performance.

5.7 Summary of findings

The results of this study show that there is a significant predictive relationship between family resilience (family communication and problem-solving, utilising social and economic resources, maintaining a positive outlook, making meaning of adversity, family spirituality, family connectedness) and learners' academic performance in the phase of middle childhood. The most prevalent correlation was found in the subscales of Maintaining a Positive Outlook and Family Connectedness. This was followed by Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity and

Family Communication & Problem Solving. The least prevalent subscales in the relationship between academic performance and family resilience were on the subscales of Utilizing Social & Economic Resources and Family Spirituality.



CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The current chapter is an investigation of the relationship between family resilience and student academic performance in the phase of middle childhood. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings of the study. The findings in Chapters 4 and 5 are examined in relation to the aims and hypotheses of the thesis discussed in Chapter 1 and integrating the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter also elaborates on family resilience, academic achievement and middle childhood. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations offered.

6.2 Prevalence of family resilience in accordance with the subscales of The Family Resilience Assessment Scale

The summary of the findings based on the objectives of the study is that there is a significant predictive relationship between family resilience and learners' academic performance in the phase of middle childhood. It is important to bear in mind that there is not much literature available on the prevalence of family resilience in the South African context, but internationally, there has been considerable research in this field.

Family resiliency is the ability of a family to respond positively to an adverse event and to emerge strengthened, more resourceful and more confident (Simon et al., 2005). Resilience develops not through the evasion of adverse events, but through a family's successful use of protective factors to cope with these events and become stronger (O'Leary 1998). Given that families are diverse and reside in dynamic environments, it is assumed that family resilience

varies over time, and is a process rather than an outcome (Rutter 1999). One can also argue that the presence of resilience is only possible because of the experience of adversity. Resiliency is fostered by protective factors and inhibited and developed owing to risk factors. Protective factors modify or transform responses to adverse events so that families avoid possible negative outcomes. Conversely, risk factors are circumstances that increase the probability of poor outcomes. Protective and risk factors are not static entities; they change in relation to context (Walsh 2003), which leads to different outcomes.

Silliman (1994), Masten (2001) and Rutter (1990) are amongst many family scientists, who are explaining the phenomenon of rising above challenges by the strength-based model of resilience; examining positive coping factors rather than deficits. Consistent with a strengths approach and adaptability, McCubbin and McCubbin (1988) defined family resilience as “characteristics, dimensions, and properties of families which help families to be resilient to disruption in the face of change and adaptive in the face of crisis situations” (p. 247). It follows that healthy (strong) families may be explained as sharing resilient processes in response to stress or change. Family resilience clarifies why some families not only survive problems but thrive and become stronger as a result. The qualities of resilience can be developed at any time of the family life cycle and are often enhanced and refined through problem solving (Walsh, 1998, 2003b). Family interactions and a general optimistic attitude are at the heart of weaving a strong and unique tapestry of resilience as families continue to love and support each other through normative and unexpected challenges.

The results of this study are based on the nine factor structure supporting Walsh’s (1988) model of family resilience, which Sixbey then transformed into six factors based on her scale. The preliminary factor analysis was not conducted on the pilot sample due to the small number of participants (n = 27). However, changes were made from the pilot participant feedback and

the instrument was then completed by 194 participants. The dimensions of the Family Resilience Assessment Scale, which include Family Communication and Problem-solving (FCPS), Utilizing Social and Economic Resources (USER), Maintaining a Positive Outlook (MPO), Family Connectedness (FC), Family Spirituality (FS) and Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity (AMMA), are processes which make up family resilience.

6.2.1 Family Communication and Problem Solving (FCPS):

The results of the current study indicated the following items were most prevalent in the subscale of FCPS: *'We learn from each other's mistakes'* and *'We share responsibility in the family'*. The least prevalent items were *'We are able to work through pain and come to an understanding'* and: *'We can show our feelings at home without upsetting someone.'*

According to Walsh (1998b) communication processes that clarify ambiguous situations, encourage open emotional expression and empathic response, and foster collaborative problem solving are especially important in facilitating resilience. Research suggest that indicators of quality time with one's family (e.g., regular family meals; Eisenberg et al. 2004) and certain after-school activities (e.g., sports, music) are positively related to children's well-being (Bastian, 2000; Donaldson and Ronan, 2006; Posner and Vandell, 1999; Steptoe and Butler, 1996). It is in forums of this nature that family communication and problem solving are enhanced. The interactivity of these family times creates a sense of belonging for the middle childhood learner, who in turn feels secure that problems will be addressed and possible solutions to them will materialise.

6.2.2 Utilizing Social and Economic Resources (USER)

Most prevalent items in this subscale were found to be: *'We know we are important to our friends'* and *'We feel people in this community are willing to help in an emergency'*. The items

that were least prevalent were: *'We think this is a good community to raise children'* and: *'We can depend upon people in this community'*.

Previous research by Staveteig and Wigton (2005) state that all families benefit from community resources, but those with a host of other social problems can particularly benefit from external support. According to Luthar (1999) the poor have all the personal and family problems everyone else has, along with complications of poverty, isolation, and a loss of community. Family isolation with a lack of social support can erode resilience, particularly under stressful conditions.

Children who perceive their community and neighbourhood as safe and satisfying have been found to benefit through improved academic grades and fewer problem behaviours than those who see their neighbourhood as threatening (Woolley & Grogan-Kaylor, 2006). Particularly for families living in impoverished or isolated conditions, the availability and use of quality support systems can dramatically increase positive outcomes, such as perseverance, hope, education, and companionship (Orthner et al., 2004). If parents are not able to provide emotional support for children, other kin or mentors may step in to offer the children support, positive role models, and protection (Aronowitz & Morrison-Beedy, 2004). Healthy families have the strength to admit when they need help and are more likely to turn to extended family, friends, neighbours, community services, or counselling (Walsh, 1998). Unfortunately, there appear to be two trends diminishing a family's interaction with the community. One is the tendency to withdraw from society; the other is a lack of available services. The trends toward relocation and smaller family size in modern society have frayed kin and community connections, requiring the establishment of new forms of social support (Hanson, 2001a).

6.2.3 Maintaining a Positive Outlook (MPO)

'We trust things will work out even in difficult times' and *'We have the strength to solve our problems'* were the two most prevalent items in the subscale of MPO, and *'We can solve major problems'* and *'We can survive if another problem comes up'* were the least prevalent items.

An optimistic confidence in overcoming odds lies at the heart of resilience. Rutter (1987) identified an approaching style to new situations and a sense of humour as important features in viewing crises as meaningful or comprehensible. The importance of optimism was emphasized again by Rutter in 1993:

Almost certainly, it is not that there is one "right" way of thinking about things, or one optimal style of coping. Rather, what seems important is to approach life's challenges with a positive frame of mind, a confidence that one can deal with the situation, and a repertoire of approaches. (p. 630)

Bradbury and Karney (2004) reported that displays of positive emotions (such as affection, humour, offering positive solutions, and accepting suggestions) were more influential in marital satisfaction than problem solving or communication. Hope for the future was found to foster resilience, measured by the avoidance of risky behaviours, among 443 impoverished inner-city black female adolescents and to thwart risk-taking behaviours in Aronowitz and Morrison-Beedy's (2004) study. Affirming strengths and possibilities, maintaining courage and hope, and remaining optimistic have been shown to be effective methods of coping for families (McCreary & Dancy, 2004).

The comfort and security of a resilient home may be seen as a protective and secure base for all family members (Bowlby, 1982). In times of crisis, the family's pulling together and turning to each other for support has been found to be one of the most important recovery factors in resilience (White et al., 2004).

On the contrary, unpreparedness and the inability to tackle or solve major problems, creates a sense of uncertainty and instability within the middle childhood learner and family resilience is stifled in such instances.

6.2.4 Family Connectedness (FC)

The most prevalent items on the subscale of FC were: '*We show love and affection for family members*' and '*Our friends value us and who we are*'. Least prevalent items on the subscale were: '*We seldom listen to family members' concerns or problems*' and '*We feel taken advantage of by family members*'.

According to Olson (2000) the premise of the systems approach to families is that the whole and its parts must be connected and content for both to continue. A family system works when its members feel good about the family, needs are being met, and the development of relationships flows smoothly. McCubbin et al. (2002) and Walsh (1998) further state that family cohesion enhances family confidence that problems are comprehensible, manageable, meaningful, and that higher levels of reorganization and adjustment are reached after the crisis. Well-functioning family members tend to interact on a daily basis with nurturance and compliments, and they reinforce each-others' efforts (Walsh, 2003a).

6.2.5 Family Spirituality (FS)

The following items were the most prevalent items in the subscale of FS: '*We have faith in a supreme being*' and '*We attend church/synagogue/mosque services*'. The least prevalent items were: '*We take part in church/mosque activities*' and '*We seek advice from religious advisors, such as priests, imams, etc.*'

According to Antonovsky and Sourani (1988) families can be helped to gain a sense of coherence by recasting a crisis as a shared challenge that is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful to tackle. Normalizing and contextualizing members' distress as natural or understandable in their crisis situation can soften their reactions and reduce blame, shame, and guilt. Drawing out and affirming family strengths in the midst of difficulties helps to counter a sense of helplessness, failure, and despair as it reinforces pride, confidence, and a "can-do" spirit. The encouragement of family members bolsters efforts to take initiative and persevere in efforts to overcome barriers. Although spiritual resources have been largely neglected in clinical practice, they can be tapped as wellsprings for resilience (Walsh, 1999).

6.2.6 Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity (AMMA)

In the subscale of AMMA, the most prevalent items were: *'The things we do for each other make us feel a part of the family'* and *'We accept that problems which we do not expect, can happen.'* The least prevalent item was: *'We accept stressful events as part of life.'*

Landau (2007) states that strong families are able to maintain relative equilibrium as they manage both the more common day-to-day challenges with those that are more unique to the typical family's experience. According to what researchers have found, Bermudez (2013) highlights a number of family characteristics that promote resilience to change. These resilience-promoting characteristics can be seen throughout the family system. Healthy couples are able to be flexible and adapt as a team to new circumstances in the event of transitions or change (Gottman, 2011). Within the parent-child relationship, healthy parents encourage children's adaptive responses to change, are responsive to children's distress, and access needed social and economic resources that enable the family to maintain equilibrium (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Resilience is vital for individuals and families to be able to deal

with inevitable changes that will happen. Strong families will strive to be resilient in adapting to everyday changes and not just when extreme situations or traumas occur.

6.3 The relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood

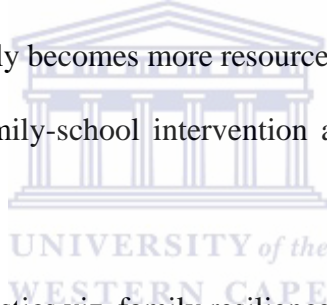
The skills, attitudes and behaviours of the middle childhood learner factor into their academic success. Other contributing resources are cognitive abilities, beliefs and motivation, with IQ being one of the most powerful predictors of success. Academic competence is also influenced by beliefs and attitudes about school (Stevenson et al. 1993) and motivations to succeed (Henderson & Dweck, 1990).

South African students score at low levels in mathematics and language tests even when compared with students in other African countries (van der Berg and Louw, 2006). Whilst there is widespread agreement that the main challenge in South Africa is the quality of education, there is little empirical analysis that helps policy makers understand the low level of student performance in South African schools or how to improve it.

“A healthy family is neither average nor merely lacking in negative characteristics. Rather, it has described, positive features” (Epstein, Ryan, Bishop, Miller, & Keitner (2003, p. 581). A child’s home and school represent distinct microsystems that shape important developmental outcomes. Each microsystem presents its own set of potential risks, or threats to development, as well as protective and promotive factors that counteract those threats and facilitate wellbeing (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008). The nature of the relationship between home and school microsystems has been examined for decades using a unidirectional model, wherein home-environment characteristics are analysed for their effects on school-related outcomes. Because of the abundance of work in this area, scholars of economics, sociology, education,

and psychology now largely agree that parental education, socioeconomic status, and family structure have main effects on the academic performance of youth (Coleman et al., 1966; Reardon, 2011).

A family resilience perspective considers each interaction between home and school as an opportunity to strengthen a family's capacity to overcome adversity and successfully rear its children (Walsh, 1998, 2003). Two basic premises guide this resilience theory approach. The first premise is that while stressful crises and persistent economic, physical, and social challenges influence the whole family, key family processes mediate the impact of these crises. A second premise is that while family processes mediate how children are prepared to participate in school, these key family processes can be strengthened by the way the school responds to families. As the family becomes more resourceful, its ability to rear its children is enhanced. As a result, each family-school intervention also can be a preventive measure (Amatea et al., 2006).



The home-environment characteristics viz. family resilience, is essential for positive effects on school-related outcomes. Students who experience more family related advantages and resources at home tend to perform better academically, and schools that enrol higher proportions of these students tend to be deemed successful by state accountability standards.

The results of this study indicated that the highest scores in the relationship between family resilience and academic performance were: Maintaining a Positive Outlook (MPO) and Family Connectedness (FC). This was followed by Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity (AMMA) and Family Communication and Problem Solving (FCPS). The lowest scores were found in Utilising Social and Economic Resources (USER) and Family Spirituality (FS).

6.3.1 Maintaining a Positive Outlook (MPO)

Maintaining a positive outlook does not mean that negative behaviours are ignored, but rather that various viewpoints and each member's opinions are examined to identify underlying problems, always augmenting positive aspects (Leon, 2003). A sense of hope, purpose, and meaning in life are vital to emotional well-being, evasion of risk behaviours, and goal-directed behaviours and cognitions (Duke, Borowsky, Pettingell, & McMorris, 2011). There is evidence that children who hold a positive outlook for their future manage stress better than those with less optimism, an indication that hopefulness, as a personal attribute, promotes healthy adaptation and resilience in the face of risk (Wyman, Cowen, Work, & Kerley, 1993). This positive outlook, coupled with a sense of security in the knowledge that their families are able to rebound from challenging situations, are necessary to assist learners to cope with challenges and gear them up for positive academic performance.

6.3.2 Family connectedness (FC)

Resilience research has taken many different forms, used many means of assessment throughout, and shown many different key concepts to be of importance. Despite flaws in early resilience studies, recent studies continue to corroborate the importance of similar factors such as connections to competent and caring adults in the family and community, cognitive and self-regulation skills, positive views of self, and motivation to be effective in the environment (Masten, 2001).

Because of the abundance of work in this area of family connectedness, scholars of economics, sociology, education, and psychology now largely agree that parental education, socioeconomic status, and family structure have main effects on the academic performance of youth (Reardon, 2011) and an aggregated effect on system-level school performance indicators,

such as state-mandated standardized test scores (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). In other words, students who experience more family related advantages and resources at home tend to perform better academically. Family support and involvement in schools have also been correlated with high student academic performance (Benard 2004; Christenson and Havsy 2004; Rumberger 1995). Displays of affection and a sense of feeling valued creates a safe space for a child to live in. Because of this connectedness, the child is able to thrive in other areas of development as well.

6.3.3 Ability to Make Meaning of Adversity (AMMA)

In the field of education, resilience studies provide evidence that many students succeed academically despite adverse economic conditions (Gamerzy, Masten, and Tellegen 1984; Rutter 1987; Benard 2004; Gizir and Aydin 2009), homelessness and transitory situations (Masten et al. 2008), violence and conflict-affected settings (Boyden 2003; Ungar 2005 and 2012), and social exclusion (Borma and Overman 2004). Resilience matters in education because learning and school success are not only possible in spite of adversity, education can also be the vehicle to overcome it. Individuals facing adversity seek to make sense of the situation they are experiencing and find a purpose that in turn will allow them to make meaningful and positive decisions. Since the 1970s many children who were raised in deprived, adverse environments actually went on to become successful and loving individuals (Luthar et al., 2000).

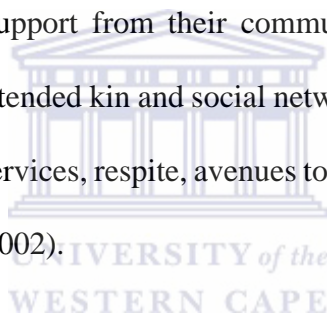
6.3.4 Family Communication and Problem Solving (FCPS)

Educators have recognized for many years that students' academic, social, and behavioural competence is associated with strong home support for learning. Recent research confirms that learning at home and outside of school differentiates high and low achievers in many schools

(Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2001). Families that have learnt and applied the skills of effective communication in confronting issues that arise, and who find effective ways to solve problems, are able to create a climate conducive to learning and enhancing academic performance for learners within the household. Learners will thrive on the secure sense that he/she may pursue schoolwork, with the full knowledge the problems will be taken care of.

6.3.5 Utilising Social and Economic Resources (USER)

According to Luthar et al. (2000) a family's community and social support system can offer a rich, protective sense of belonging and cohesion. There is a growing appreciation for the broader view of resiliency as a complex interaction with community networks. Resilient families not only attain social support from their communities, but also give back to the community (Patterson, 2002). Extended kin and social networks can interact reciprocally with families to provide information, services, respite, avenues to contribute to the welfare of others, and companionship (Seccombe, 2002).



6.3.6 Family spirituality

Family resilience is fostered by shared beliefs that help members make meaning of crisis situations; facilitate a positive, hopeful outlook; and provide transcendent or spiritual values and purpose. Although religious coping is often depicted as passive, fatalistic, and acquiescent in recent research, Pargament (1997) has identified several types of religious coping strategies that are associated with different emotional sequelae. Religious coping functions in a variety of ways, such as through anxiety reduction, search for meaning, and social cohesiveness (Koenig et al., 2001). Further, religious scripture and belief provide behavioural guidelines for coping with problematic family relationships. Religious settings themselves provide models for religious coping behaviours as well as informal and formal sources of assistance, such as

clergy (Taylor, Ellison, Chatters, Levin, & Lincoln, 2000). Church-sponsored activities, such as family life education workshops and classes (e.g., marriage and parenting classes), provide novel information that individuals may use to evaluate problem events and resources for developing new coping skills and strategies to deal with problematic family interactions.

Recent research examining the nature of prayer and its role in individuals' coping with adversity indicates that prayer is a transformative personal experience that changes individuals in fundamental ways (e.g., forgiveness, stress reduction) and helps them to manage problems, whether the problems are life crises or daily hassles (Krause et al., 2000b; Taylor et al., 2004). As a religious coping behaviour, requesting prayer from others unambiguously signals the need for assistance from coreligionists and facilitates the provision of social support. Further, prayer from others reinforces social bonds and enhances group cohesion (Taylor et al., 2004). Finally, family prayer provides a model of coping behaviours and orientations, reinforces family cohesion and connectedness, and provides opportunities for the exchange of social support (e.g., emotional and spiritual support). Family prayer during stressful circumstances is an important ritual that provides information about the nature of the event (i.e., primary and secondary appraisals) and reinforces existing and emergent family role expectations (Howe, 2002).

Research shows that parental teaching, example, and dialogue about religious matters are important predictors of student academic performance. Religion plays a part in the coping process with respect to specific coping behaviours and strategies (e.g., spiritual support from others, prayer) as well as the enhancement and use of coping resources (Chatters, & Levin, 2004).

6.4 How children may compensate for difficulties they experience in the academic domain

What happens when children cannot claim that they feel academically competent? On the one hand, the findings of Roeser and his colleagues (Roeser & Eccles, in press; Roeser et al., 1995) suggest this is likely to lead to diminished self-esteem and social-emotional experience for many children. On the other hand, Roeser et al. (1995) also provides evidence of at least one mechanism of compensation: Youth who feel less academically competent and who receive lower marks also come to devalue academics the most. Another mechanism of compensation children can use is to change their valuing of, and engagement in achievement-related activities in other relevant life domains. Although there are several ‘culturally mandated’ dimensions of self that are likely central to esteem, including academics (eg. Stein, Markus & Roeser, 1995), some children may be able to compensate for difficulties in one area by achievement in another. For instance, in her expectancy-value formulation of achievement motivation, Eccles et al. (1983) suggests that competence and valuing of any number of achievement domains, including the performing and fine arts, sports, and the social sphere, can serve as relevant sources of esteem. Furthermore, in this model, self-perceptions of relative incompetence in one area are assumed to relate to children’s feelings of competence and value in some other domain: those children with very low academic competence beliefs may develop other strengths and competencies to compensate for their relative lack of success at school. If successful, this strategy can provide the children with another ecological niche in which to develop a sense of self efficacy.

6.5 Limitations

No study is without its limitations. For this study the limitations were as follows:

- The study was conducted using self-reported questionnaires that might have indicated a measure of truth but not the actual truth as middle childhood participants were required to indicate *their own perceptions* of family resilience as *they* understood it. Other role players were not involved to compare these findings in a holistic manner.
- The study sample used, did not allow for generalization of these finding across all racial groups, as the majority of the study population identified themselves as ‘coloured’ and only a few participants identified themselves as ‘other’. A convenient sampling method was employed, and this included only participants who are readily available and who agreed to participate in the study.

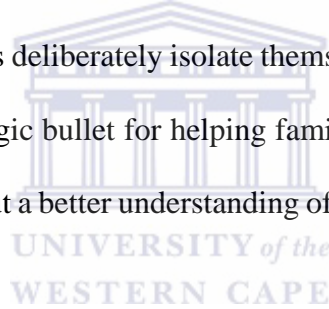
The original Family Resilience Assessment Scale was developed for adults. Although a pilot study (which was basically cognitive testing to check understanding of the questionnaire) was administered, one cannot be completely sure of the depth of understanding of the children.

6.6 Recommendations

Clinicians and practitioners have been ahead of researchers in conceptualizing family resilience (Compton & Hoffman, 2012). It would behove family scholars to consult some of the clinical literature on family resilience (see *Family Relations*, April 2002 for a Special Collection of more applied articles on family resilience). Family prevention science has documented the important role of parenting and family processes for child well-being and has identified specific family-level interactions as mediators of children’s ability to adapt and thrive in the context of adversity. Interventions that include specific developmental guidance and psycho-education, as well as the opportunity to build and practice skills that support positive parenting practices,

parent–child relationships, and individual and family coping have been shown to enhance behavioural and emotional regulation in children (O'Connell et al., 2009). Moreover, family and relationships researchers have the benefit of learning from years of pioneering work on resilience conducted by psychiatrists and developmental psychologists. Often this work has clear relational and familial components (Masten, 2001). Family resilience is a natural extension of child resilience. This is an important aspect in the life of the middle childhood learner and knowledge of available literature will be a guide to whichever stakeholders are involved in the life of a child, resulting in a positive outcome.

Although a problem orientation predominates in family research, researchers facilitate developing a much more complex picture of family life. Families need assistance in accessing resources as well. Not all families deliberately isolate themselves, sometimes they are not sure of where to turn. There is no magic bullet for helping families overcome the effects either of major risks or minor daily risks but a better understanding of (a strengths orientation) resilience can help (Ganong, 2002).



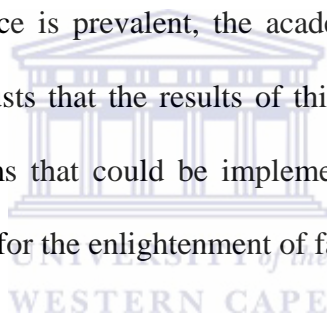
The study focused on the relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood. A healthy family environment sets a positive foundation for adulthood. As the results of this study suggest, when the process of family resilience is enhanced, the academic performance of learners is boosted. The study does highlight the need for further research particularly into family research.

A school learning community puts a laser-like focus on student learning and success (Epstein et al., 2002). School principals may start by introducing the topic in school assemblies, at school functions and in parent meetings, as well as educators promoting the concept within the classroom, which may then filter through as possible lessons. Although younger learners may not be able to comprehend the concept as such, and as it is gradually implemented into Life

Skills lessons at a basic level, and further expanded upon, the concept may become clearer. This may lead to family discussions and enlightenment for whole families.

6.7 Conclusion

During middle childhood children have a need to develop competency, particularly in domains that are societally valued such as academic achievement. Students who experience more family related advantages and resources at home tend to perform better academically, and schools that enrol higher proportions of these students tend to be deemed successful by state accountability standards. Family strengths or resiliencies can be employed to resolve a child's problem. Findings of this study indicate that even in the midst of economical, physical and social challenges, when family resilience is prevalent, the academic development of the child is strengthened. The researcher trusts that the results of this study would act as a guide and framework for effective programs that could be implemented for the academic benefit of learners in middle childhood and for the enlightenment of families, specifically with regard to implementing family resilience.



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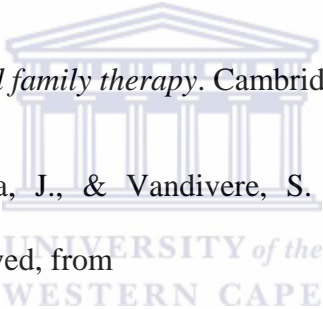
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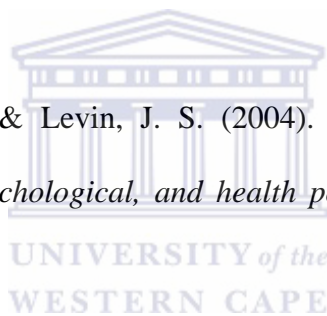
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WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX I

FAMILY RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT SCALE

Please read each statement carefully. Decide how well you believe it describes your family now from your viewpoint. Your family may include any individuals you wish.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. Our family structure is flexible to deal with the unexpected | | | | |
| 2. Our friends value us and who we are | | | | |
| 3. The things we do for each other make us feel a part of the family | | | | |
| 4. We accept stressful events as a part of life | | | | |
| 5. We accept that problems occur unexpectedly | | | | |
| 6. We all have input into major family decisions | | | | |
| 7. We are able to work through pain and come to an understanding | | | | |
| 8. We are adaptable to demands placed on us as a family | | | | |
| 9. We are open to new ways of doing things in our family | | | | |
| 10. We are understood by other family members | | | | |
| 11. We ask neighbors for help and assistance | | | | |
| 12. We attend church/synagogue/mosque services | | | | |
| 13. We believe we can handle our problems | | | | |
| 14. We can ask for clarification if we do not understand each other | | | | |
| 15. We can be honest and direct with each other in our family | | | | |
| 16. We can blow off steam at home without upsetting someone | | | | |
| 17. We can compromise when problems come up | | | | |
| 18. We can deal with family differences in accepting a loss | | | | |
| 19. We can depend upon people in this community | | | | |
| 20. We can question the meaning behind messages in our family | | | | |
| 21. We can solve major problems | | | | |
| 22. We can survive if another problem comes up | | | | |
| 23. We can talk about the way we communicate in our family | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 24. We can work through difficulties as a family | | | | |
| 25. We consult with each other about decisions | | | | |
| 26. We define problems positively to solve them | | | | |
| 27. We discuss problems and feel good about the solutions | | | | |
| 28. We discuss things until we reach a resolution | | | | |
| 29. We feel free to express our opinions | | | | |
| 30. We feel good giving time and energy to our family | | | | |
| 31. We feel people in this community are willing to help in an emergency | | | | |
| 32. We feel secure living in this community | | | | |
| 33. We feel taken for granted by family members | | | | |
| 34. We feel we are strong in facing big problems | | | | |
| 35. We have faith in a supreme being | | | | |
| 36. We have the strength to solve our problems | | | | |
| 37. We keep our feelings to ourselves | | | | |
| 38. We know there is community help if there is trouble | | | | |
| 39. We know we are important to our friends | | | | |
| 40. We learn from each other's mistakes | | | | |
| 41. We mean what we say to each other in our family | | | | |
| 42. We participate in church activities | | | | |
| 43. We receive gifts and favors from neighbors | | | | |
| 44. We seek advice from religious advisors | | | | |
| 45. We seldom listen to family members' concerns or problems | | | | |
| 46. We share responsibility in the family | | | | |
| 47. We show love and affection for family members | | | | |
| 48. We tell each other how much we care for one another | | | | |
| 49. We think this is a good community to raise children | | | | |
| 50. We think we should not get too involved with people in this community | | | | |
| 51. We trust things will work out even in difficult times | | | | |
| 52. We try new ways of working with problems | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 53. We understand communication from other family members | | | | |
| 54. We work to make sure family members are not emotionally or physically hurt | | | | |



APPENDIX II

FAMILY RESILIENCE ASSESSMENT SCALE (REVISED)

Please read each statement carefully. Decide how well you believe it describes your family now from your viewpoint. Your family may include any individuals you wish.

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| 1. Our family is flexible to deal with unexpected events eg. moving home. | | | | |
| 2. Our friends value us and who we are | | | | |
| 3. The things we do for each other make us feel a part of the family | | | | |
| 4. We accept stressful events as a part of life | | | | |
| 5. We accept that problems which we do not expect, can happen. | | | | |
| 6. We all have input into major family decisions | | | | |
| 7. We are able to work through pain and come to an understanding | | | | |
| 8. We are flexible to cope with demands placed on us as a family | | | | |
| 9. We are open to new ways of doing things in our family | | | | |
| 10. We are understood by other family members | | | | |
| 11. We ask neighbors for help and assistance | | | | |
| 12. We attend church/synagogue/mosque services | | | | |
| 13. We believe we can handle our problems | | | | |
| 14. We can ask for an explanation if we do not understand each other | | | | |
| 15. We can be honest and direct with each other in our family | | | | |
| 16. We can show our feelings at home without upsetting someone | | | | |
| 17. We can 'make a deal' with each other when problems come up | | | | |
| 18. We can deal with family differences in accepting a loss | | | | |
| 19. We can depend upon people in this community | | | | |
| 20. We can question the meaning behind messages in our family | | | | |
| 21. We can solve major problems | | | | |
| 22. We can survive if another problem comes up | | | | |
| 23. We can talk about the way we communicate in our family | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| 24. We can work through difficulties as a family | | | | |
| 25. We talk to each other about decisions we need to make | | | | |
| 26. We define problems positively to solve them | | | | |
| 27. We discuss problems and feel good about the solutions | | | | |
| 28. We discuss things until we reach a resolution | | | | |
| 29. We feel free to express our opinions | | | | |
| 30. We feel good giving time and energy to our family | | | | |
| 31. We feel people in this community are willing to help in an emergency | | | | |
| 32. We feel secure living in this community | | | | |
| 33. We feel taken advantage of by family members | | | | |
| 34. We feel we are strong in facing big problems | | | | |
| 35. We have faith in a supreme being | | | | |
| 36. We have the strength to solve our problems | | | | |
| 37. We keep our feelings to ourselves | | | | |
| 38. We know there is community help if there is trouble | | | | |
| 39. We know we are important to our friends | | | | |
| 40. We learn from each other's mistakes | | | | |
| 41. We mean what we say to each other in our family | | | | |
| 42. We take part in church/mosque activities | | | | |
| 43. We receive gifts and favors from neighbors | | | | |
| 44. We seek advice from religious advisors, such as priests, imams etc. | | | | |
| 45. We seldom listen to family members' concerns or problems | | | | |
| 46. We share responsibility in the family | | | | |
| 47. We show love and affection for family members | | | | |
| 48. We tell each other how much we care for one another | | | | |
| 49. We think this is a good community to raise children | | | | |
| 50. We think we should not get too involved with people in this community | | | | |
| 51. We trust things will work out even in difficult times | | | | |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 52. We try new ways of working with problems | | | | |
| 53. We understand how other family members talk to each other | | | | |
| 54. We work to make sure family members are not emotionally or physically hurt | | | | |



APPENDIX III



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2277/2970

E-mail: rehtse30@hotmail.com

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS



Project Title: The relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

This is a research project being conducted by Esther Alard (a master's student) at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are involved in the academic performance of the student who will be answering the questionnaire. The purpose of this research project is to examine the relationship between perceived family resilience (how families cope with problems) and the academic performance of children in the phase of middle childhood. The reason this knowledge is being sought is that families will be made aware of how to overcome certain barriers and motivate each other and thereby aid the academic performance of middle childhood learners.

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire in this study. Questions range from how families talk to one another to how they deal with problems. These questions will be answered by ticking one of the appropriate boxes: Strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The procedure will take place at the school and the duration of it will be approximately 30 minutes.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, participation in the questionnaire will be anonymous. The surveys will not contain information that may personally identify you. Completed questionnaires will be kept in secure storage areas and only the researcher will have access to them. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research?

We hope that, in future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of family resilience.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. (You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify)

If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Esther Alard at: 076 826 9742, e-mail address: rehtse30@hotmail.com.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department: Professor R. Schenk

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences: Professor Joze Frantz

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research
Committee and Ethics Commit



APPENDIX IV



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2277/2970

E-mail: rehtse30@hotmail.com

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS



Project Title: The relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood.

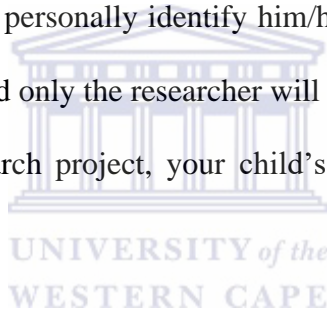
This is a research project being conducted by Esther Alard (a master's student) at the University of the Western Cape. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are involved in the academic performance of the student who will be answering the questionnaire. The purpose of this research project is to examine the relationship between perceived family resilience and the academic performance of children in the phase of middle childhood. The reason this knowledge is being sought is that families will be made aware of how to overcome certain barriers and motivate each other and thereby aid the academic performance of middle childhood learners.

You will be asked to consent to your child's participation in the study. The study will take the form of a questionnaire, which consists of 54 questions.

Questions pertain to how families collaborate with each other and how they deal with problems. These questions will be answered by ticking one of the appropriate boxes: Strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The procedure will take place at the school and the duration of it will be approximately 30 minutes.

Would my child's participation in this study be kept confidential?

We will do our best to keep your child's personal information confidential. To help protect his/her confidentiality, participation in the questionnaire will be anonymous. The surveys will not contain information that may personally identify him/her. Completed questionnaires will be kept in secure storage areas and only the researcher will have access to them. If we write a report or article about this research project, your child's identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.



There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research?

We hope to contribute to the knowledge base of family psychology and, in future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of family resilience.

Your child's participation in this research is completely voluntary. (He/She may choose not to take part at all. If your child decides to participate in this research, he/she may stop participating at any time. If your child decides not to participate in this study or if he/she stops participating at any time, your child will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which he/she otherwise qualifies).

If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Esther Alard at: 076 826 9742, e-mail address: rehtse30@hotmail.com.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:

Head of Department: Professor R. Schenk

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences: Professor Joze Frantz

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535



This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Commit

APPENDIX V



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2277/2970

E-mail:rehtse30@hotmail.com

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Title of Research Project:

The relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood



The study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant's name

Participant's signature

Date

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

Study Coordinator's Name: Dr N Roman

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: (021) 959-3095

E-mail:nroman@uwc.ac.za



APPENDIX VI



UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: +27 21-959 2277/2970

E-mail:rehtse30@hotmail.com

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS



Title of Research Project:

The relationship between family resilience and academic performance of learners in the phase of middle childhood

The study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily allow my child to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my child's identity will not be disclosed and that he/she may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect him/her in any way.

Parent's name

Parent's signature

Date

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

Study Coordinator's Name: Dr N Roman

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa

Tel: (021) 959-3095

E-mail: nroman@uwc.ac.za



APPENDIX VII

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Please complete the following by marking the correct response with an X.

| | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------------|-------------|----------------|---------|-------|
| Gender | Male | | Female | | | |
| Age | | | | | | |
| Grade | | | | | | |
| Race | Coloured | Black/ African | White | Indian / Asian | | |
| Home language | Afrikaans | English | IsiXhosa | Other | | |
| I live with my...(tick as many as you have in your house) | Mother | Father | Grandparent | Uncle/Aunt | Sibling | Child |
| Is there a child with a disability living in your home? | Yes | | | No | | |

FAMILY RESILIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire contains a number of statements related to opinions and feelings about you and life in general. Read each statement carefully, then indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by indicating one of the alternative categories provided. For example, if you **Strongly Agree**, indicate **SA**. If you are **Agree**, indicate **A**. If you **Strongly Disagree**, indicate **SD**. If you **Disagree**, indicate **D**.



1. Our past achievements have given our life meaning and purpose _____

2. In our life we have very clear goals and aims _____

3. We have discovered a satisfying life purpose _____