THE ENHANCEMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR FOUNDATION PHASE LEARNERS WHO EXPERIENCE PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES AT ONE NO-FEE SCHOOL IN THE CAPE METROPOLE

By ALZETTE BROWN

Student Number: 3207476

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTERS OF EDUCATION (M.Ed.)

Faculty of Education, in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of the Western Cape

SUPERVISOR: Professor TREVOR MOODLEY

2024

DECLARATION

I, Alzette Brown, Student Number: **3207476**, declare that the thesis entitled: *The enhancement of psychosocial support for Foundation Phase (FP) learners who experience psychosocial challenges at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole* is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

A. BROWN

_____ _____

SIGNATURE DATE

PROFESSOR T. MOODLEY (SUPERVISOR)

_____ _____

SIGNATURE DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- To God for his unconditional mercy and grace. "*By the grace of God I am what I am"*: 1 Corinthians 15:10.
- To Professor T. Moodley, thank you for your guidance, patience and motivation.
- To my husband, Roland, thank you for your love, tremendous support and encouragement.
- To my daughter, Zoé, thank you for your love and patience.
- To the Western Cape Education Department for granting permission to conduct this research.
- To the participants of this study, thank you for your valuable input.
- To my mom, late dad (R.I.P) and the rest of my family, thank you for your prayers.

ABSTRACT

Psychosocial support has been identified as a priority action area by the Department of Basic Education in South Africa. It is therefore a pivotal part of teaching and learning, especially for vulnerable learners who attend schools in low socio-economic communities that face various social challenges such as poverty, violence and substance abuse. The Care and Support for Teaching and Learning policy document emphasises the importance of psychosocial support provision to alleviate the impact of the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners, thus creating opportunities for all learners to develop holistically.

This study explored the psychosocial challenges experienced by foundation phase learners at a no-fee school in the Cape Metropole. The study was guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Erikson's psychosocial theory of development.

A qualitative research design was adopted, purposive sampling was employed and data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews with the learner support teacher, a school management team representative and a school-based support team representative. In addition, focus group interviews were conducted with four foundation phase educator participants and six parents of foundation phase learners. The parent participants also completed a questionnaire relating to the study. Finally, document analysis of the of relevant policy documents relating to psychosocial support provision for learners, was conducted.

The study found that the foundation phase learners experience various psychosocial challenges. Even though the school had a functional school-based support team, a number of challenges in the provision of psychosocial support, were identified. Consequently, not all learners in need of psychosocial support, could be assisted, therefore highlighting the gap between policy and practice.

The following recommendations were made to enhance psychosocial support: the need for a full-time school-based learning support teacher, the revision of the school-based support team policy to improve support strategies, improving the responsiveness of and the provision of more extensive support by district-based education specialists, psychosocial skills training for educators and skills-based training for unemployed parents.

CONTENT

CHAPTER 3 - Research Methodology

CHAPTER 4 - Presentation and Discussion of Findings

CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSTL	Care and Support for Teaching and Learning
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CBOs	Community-based organisations
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DBST	District Based Support Team
DSD	Department of Social Development
FBOs	Faith-Based Organisations
FP	Foundation Phase
ISP	Individual Support Plan
ISHP	Integrated School Health Policy
LST	Learning Support Teacher
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPOs	Non-Profit Organisations
SBST	School Based Support Team
SMT	School Management Team
SNA	Special Needs Assessment
SIAS	Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

Almost three decades have passed since South Africa's first democratic elections; yet the epitome of inequality and social stagnation created by South Africa's apartheid government is still quite evident in the lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole. The lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole are commonly known as home to predominantly coloured people (people of mixed descent) and black Africans. The lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole are historical demographic areas that were created by the apartheid regime for people of colour including black Africans who were forcefully removed from their homes, to create exclusive race-based residential areas, under the South African Group Areas Act (Act 41, 1950). Due to a lack of infrastructure, the lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole developed into areas marked by unemployment, gangs, drug abuse, violence and crime, thus fostering poor social cohesion (Chetty, 2015; De Lannoy et al., 2018). Learners within the lower socio-economic areas in the Cape Metropole therefore battle the psychosocial challenges from a young age that has been brought about by historical as well as contemporary factors with limited support (Chetty, 2015). This paper seeks to explore the psychosocial challenges faced by Foundation phase (FP) learners at a no-fee school in the Cape Metropole and how the psychosocial support rendered to them, can be enhanced.

South African public schools are classified according to a quintile system (South African School Act 84, 1996). This means that schools have been ranked into five categories from quintile 1 to 5. Schools ranked quintiles 1 and 2 are deemed poor and allow learners to enroll without having to pay fees. In return the South African government funds the expenses of those schools, that were previously covered by school fees (South African School Act 84, 1996). The No-Fee policy applies the quintile ranks according to the estimated level of poverty in the area in which the school is located (South African School Act 84, 1996). Therefore, the poverty level of each school, which encompasses the household income, unemployment rate and the level of education of the community, assigns it to a quintile rank that serves as a pro-poor mechanism used to determine the amount of

funding for each school from the provincial education department (de Villiers et al., 2012; van Dyk & White, 2019).

Poverty has a significant impact on children's growth and development. Since FP learners are in the middle childhood phase, it may be prudent to consider Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1963) when deliberating about the educational development of poor FP children. Erikson (1963) stresses the importance of the psychosocial development of middle childhood children (5 – 12 years old). According to Erikson (1963) at this stage the child acquires social and academic skills to feel self-assured, a negative outcome may lead to a sense of failure and inferiority, which can give rise to psychosocial challenges. Additionally, Mahembe (2012) alludes that children of school going age begin to define themselves in psychological terms; they develop a concept of who they are, what they can do and what they are unable to do without support. It is therefore important that schools adopt the position of a powerful agency during the FP of schooling to ensure that effective psychosocial support that promotes resilience is rendered to vulnerable FP learners. Early screening of FP learners is thus an important component in rendering effective support to learners, as it enables FP educators to identify learners who present risk factors and in so doing, initiate the intervention process (Karimupfumbi & Dwarika, 2022).

1.2 Rationale for the study

Many learners in South African schools, in both the primary and secondary phase of schooling experience psychosocial challenges due to race inequality brought on by South Africa's apartheid regime, which consequently manifested social ills such as poverty, unemployment, violence and gangsterism in vulnerable communities (Chetty, 2015; Silbert & Mzozoyana, 2019). The social growth and academic development of some FP learners in the lower socio-economic areas of the Cape Metropole is often overshadowed by the psychosocial challenges that they experience (Baxen, 2015, p. 216) and often their schools are not equipped with the necessary resources to offer them an effective support system (Nel et al., 2016).

Unequal and inadequate access to resources continue to play a role in contributing to the psychosocial challenges faced in South African under-resourced communities, which consequently affect the wellness of members of the school community in that context (Donald, Lazarus, & Moolla, 2016, p.182). According to Statistics SA (2016) 60% of children aged between 3 – 15 years in the Western Cape not attending school are coloureds and

31,4% are black Africans. The Statistics SA (2016) report states that socioeconomic disparities play a role in children not attending school and whilst the introduction of intervention programmes such as the child support grant, no-fee schools, school nutrition and scholar transport were introduced to alleviate some socioeconomic disparities, research shows that eligible children with illiterate caregivers do not benefit from these intervention programmes. Thus, further highlighting the need to explore the psychosocial challenges and the types of psychosocial support currently offered to FP learners specifically at no-fee schools in the Cape Metropole. In addition, Chetty (2015) argues that those most in need of governmental protection and increased support in South Africa are children in no-fee schools, which are the most vulnerable.

The Department of Basic Education (2014, p. 7) acknowledges that every learner needs support, some may require additional support for learning caused by factors relating to "social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, disability or family care circumstances" hence a policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) was compiled to guide the support provision at school and district level.

Currently the intervention support structure rendered to most public schools in the Cape Metropole includes the provision of feeding scheme services as well as the services of a Learner Support Teacher (LST). The Western Cape Education Department (2007) states that almost a third of the total population of primary school-going children from grade R to Grade 7 in the province receives basic nutrition through the primary school nutrition programme. Additionally, in accordance with current school practice, school level support for learners is provided by the School-Based Support Team (SBST), which consists of a LST, a teacher who is part of the School's Management Team (SMT) and a teacher who has particular expertise to offer around a specific need or challenge (DBE, 2014). Furthermore, additional high-level support that cannot be organised at school level can be sourced from the provincial education department District-Based Support Team, which includes "social workers, therapists, psychologists, other health professionals working within the school system as well as curriculum and school managers, and human resource planning and development coordinators" (DBE, 2014, p. 35). However, the demand for DBST support is excessive since each team is assigned to a designated geographical area consisting of approximately 20 to 60 schools (Moolla, 2011). Furthermore, Moolla (2011, p. 8) states that a "lack of expertise, relationship dynamics and capacity challenges have left personnel at district level feeling challenged in terms of their ability to respond to the needs

of schools holistically and in a coordinated, collaborative way."

As an educator with almost seven years teaching experience, I've had the opportunity to teach in the Foundation and Intermediate phase of mainstream schooling. I am a member of the SBST at the institution where I teach. In addition, I also had the opportunity to fulfill an acting Head of Department position in the FP for approximately two years, which coincided with the COVID pandemic. During this time, it especially became quite evident that inequality in education is still a reality for learners who attend school in low socio-economic communities. Even though my colleagues and I explored different options of attempting to provide our learners with educational resources to ensure that learning continues amidst the COVID pandemic, our attempts did not have the desired outcome.

Moreover, my daily engagement with learners highlighted the adverse circumstances that many of them experience and it became evident that their lived experiences impact on their development. Although support provision for learners experiencing barriers to learning is an important component in the education sector, as stipulated by the DBE (2014), I have always been intrigued by the support offered to affected learners and how the application of psychosocial support provision can be enhanced in practice.

This study therefore endeavored to advocate that effective psychosocial support provision to FP learners can be the much-needed element of change to transform social stagnation in the lower socio-economic areas of the Cape Metropole.

1.3 The research problem

Mwoma and Pillay (2015); Nel and Grosser (2016) are of the opinion that teachers need to be trained to address the psychosocial problems of children that lead to poor performance and children dropping out of school. Mwoma and Pillay (2015) argue that minimal psychosocial support is offered in public primary schools, including lack of professionals to provide guidance and counselling services. Similarly, Chetty (2015) also argues that schools in the lower socio-economic areas, in particular no-fee schools, lack basic educational resources and have too little support from government agencies to tackle social issues. Furthermore, in a recent study conducted by Pillay et al. (2023), they concur that South African children who attend schools in low socio-economic areas, face various adversities such as poverty, abuse and violence in their homes and communities. Pillay et al. (2023) also allude that there is a scarcity of basic knowledge and insights concerning psychosocial

interventions amongst educators. In addition, Mahwai & Ross (2023) state that in South African school settings, the shortage of social workers, registered counsellors and psychologists who are trained to provide psychosocial support to learners who experience adversities, is of great concern. Therefore, there is a need to re-evaluate the effectiveness of the psychosocial support rendered to FP learners. The current study hopes to make an important contribution to the body of knowledge related to the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole and also how this support can be enhanced.

1.4 Research questions

My study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1.4.1 Main research question

What is the nature of support provided to FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges at a no-fee school in the Cape Metropole?

1.4.2 Research sub-questions

- What types of psychosocial challenges do FP learners experience at the no-fee school?
- What support is provided to address the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at the no-fee school?
- How can the psychosocial support given to FP learners at the no-fee school be enhanced?

1.5 Theoretical framework

This study employed Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems framework with particular focus on the micro and mesosystems as well as Erik Erickson's psychosocial theory of development, focusing on the industry versus inferiority stage. "The school plays a crucial role in the development of children and in some cases may even supersede the role of the family, given the breakdown of family structures and relationships in many communities in South Africa" (Moolla, 2011, p. 53). Additionally, Moolla (2011, p. 53) states that "an effective school, therefore, connects with families, churches, clinics, non-government organisations and district offices in order to ensure that issues are understood holistically and are

addressed systemically." Consequently, the work of Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) is often referred to in order to highlight the importance of understanding the influence of systems on an individual's development (Moolla, 2011).

Similarly, Erikson's psychosocial theory brings to the fore the importance of each stage of childhood development. For the purpose of this study, the focus was on elementary (primary) school-aged children who develop a sense of industry and feelings of competence as they learn that they can win recognition for their developing skills and accomplishments and in so doing, they understand their valued strengths, thus they need an environment in which they can experience competence (Gonzalez, DeHass & Willems, 2012, p.111).

Both Erikson's and Bronfenbrenner's theories place emphasis on the importance of context and the reciprocal influences that family, school or the school's network of stakeholders and the local community have, on the development of the child. More so the immediate environment of a no-fee school, being the most under resourced, gives rise to many psychosocial challenges for FP learners, thus stressing the importance of rendering effective psychosocial support to the affected learners. Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

1.6 Research methodology

1.6.1 Research paradigm

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107) view a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that represent a worldview that defines the nature of the world and the individual's place in it. This study adopted an interpretivist paradigm, as the data collection process for this study primarily focused on construing the phenomenon from the participants' point of view. According to Willis (2007, p. 583) the fundamental belief of interpretivism is that reality (ontology) is socially constructed through human interaction. Therefore, an interpretivist paradigm allows researchers to view the world through the experiences of the participants and in turn the researcher studies those experiences to construct and interpret his or her understanding from the gathered data (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The interpretivist paradigm was thus appropriate for this study, as it enabled the researcher to study the phenomenon under focus, through the experiences and views of the participants. The paradigm that underpins my study is presented in detail in Chapter 3.

1.6.2 Research approach

A basic qualitative approach was employed for this study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016) the criteria of a basic qualitative approach encompasses how people interpret their experiences; construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. All qualitative research highlights a central characteristic; that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds, their lives and experiences; hence the theoretical underpinnings of a basic qualitative study stems from constructivism (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). The qualitative researcher thus endeavoures to understand how human beings construct meanings of the phenomenon of interest (Willis, 2007). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) states that basic qualitative studies are the most common form of qualitative research found in education, as it is well suited to obtain an in-depth understanding of educational processes. Employing a basic qualitative approach for this study enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of FP teachers and FP parents' experiences regarding the psychosocial challenges that FP learners at a no-fee school experienced and the effectiveness of the level of support that the learners received. Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research approach used in this study.

1.6.3 Research design

Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 58) view a research design as a description of a "flexible set of guidelines that connect theoretical paradigms to strategies of inquiry and to methods for collecting empirical materials." A research design therefore focuses on the purposes of the study, the research question, the information that will answer the research questions and the most effective strategies for obtaining the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This study adopted a basic qualitative research design, which is referred to as an interpretive process in which the researcher collects and makes an interpretation between different meanings and views of the participant's lived experiences of the phenomenon of interest, using interviews, observations and documents as a means of collecting data (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). This study employed purposive sampling and data was gathered through individual semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires with open-ended, self-constructed questions that enabled the researcher to interpret the participants' meanings relating to the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners as well as the support offered to them at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole. In an attempt to uncover and interpret these meanings, the collected data was analysed and presented according to themes. A detailed description of the research design used in this study is presented in

Chapter 3.

1.6.4 Data collection methods

Creswell (2007, p. 20) alludes that “the goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” being studied. According to Moser and Korstjens (2018) interviews and focus group discussions are among the most frequent qualitative data collection methods. Interviews as a data collection method refers to a face-to-face, telephonic or online interaction between the researcher and the participants where the researcher asks topic related questions whilst focus group discussions as a data collection method refers to a discussion about the phenomenon of interest between the researcher and a small group of participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Ultimately the purpose of qualitative data collection is to enable the researcher to understand the meanings of central themes as experienced in the life world of the participants (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

Data collection for this study was gathered via individual semi-structured interviews with the SMT representative, the SBST representative and the (LST) as well as focus group discussions with the selected four FP teachers and the six FP parents. Additionally, the six participating FP parents completed a questionnaire. The interview questions as well as the questionnaire was self-constructed and open-ended, guided by the theoretical framework of the study, which informed the development of the items in the interview schedule. Creswell (2007, p. 21) states that “the more open-ended the questioning, the better” as it creates an opportunity for the researcher to listen carefully to what people say or do in their life setting. Creswell (2007) also suggests that broad and general questions enable the participants to construct the meaning of a situation. The individual semi-structured interviews as well as the focus group discussions was audio recorded, thus enabling the researcher to capture the participants’ expressions and emotions. Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) emphasize that the recording should be transcribed after each interview with meticulous accuracy including indications of pauses and mis-hearings. Lastly, this study also analysed the following documents: SIAS (2014), CSTL (2014), ISHP (2012) and the SBST policy of the school under study. The data collection methods adopted in this study are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.6.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was employed as a qualitative analytic method for this intended study. Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to a thematic analysis as a process of identifying, analysing

and reporting themes within the data that describes the data set in rich detail. Consequently, a theme represents something important within the data set that relates to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a thematic analysis is a recursive process that encompasses six phases, thus movement is back and forth throughout the phases as needed. In phase one the researcher familiarizers herself or himself with the data by transcribing data into written form, reading and re-reading the data and noting down initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase two entails coding interesting features of the data in a systemic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code, thus generating initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase three focuses on searching for themes through arranging codes into potential themes and gathering all data relevant to each potential theme whilst phase four entails reviewing themes by checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, thus generating a thematic map of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Phase five involves generating clear definitions and names for each theme through ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally phase six entails producing a report of the analysis and in so doing the researcher relates back to the research question and literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Similarly, Moser and Korstjens (2018) allude that a qualitative data analysis is a frequentative process whereby the researcher moves back and forth between the research process to accumulate rich data. Chapter 3 presents a detailed description of the data analysis employed in this study.

1.6.6 Trustworthiness of the data

Guba and Lincoln (2005) emphasise that the value of a researched study is measured by its trustworthiness. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), establishing trustworthiness involves:

- **Credibility** - establishing whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views.
- **Transferability** - refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts.
- **Dependability** - refers to the stability of the research findings over time.
- **Confirmability** - establishing that the findings are shaped by the data as derived from the research participants.

- **Bracketing –** refers to the process in which the researcher suspends his or her beliefs relating the phenomenon.

This qualitative study employed various techniques as suggested by Guba and Lincoln (2005). Method triangulation, audit trail, reflective journal, member checking and a pilot study formed part of the techniques used in this study for establishing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and bracketing. Chapter 3 outlines how trustworthiness of the data was achieved in this study.

1.7 Research ethics

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the University of the Western Cape's (UWC's) Research Ethics Committee. In order to conduct the research at the school under study, permission was requested from the Western Cape Education Department (WCED). I also obtained permission from the school principal to conduct the research at the school identified for this study. Permission was also obtained from all the participants of this study. Chapter 3 presents a detailed overview of the ethical considerations employed in this study.

1.8 Outline of the rest of the chapters in the thesis

Chapter two presents the literature review that supported the research topic and the theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

Chapter three outlines the research methodology and design applied by the researcher to collect the data for the study.

Chapter four encompasses the presentation and discussion of the findings as per the data collected from the research participants of this study as well as the data that emerged from the document analysis.

Chapter five presents the summary of the study's findings, conclusion as well as the limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided a brief discussion of the background to the study, as well as the rationale, the problem statement and the research questions of this study. It also introduced the research methodology, theoretical framework, data analysis and data collection methods as well as the ethical considerations employed by the study. The following chapter presents the literature reviewed for this study.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the background of the study as well as the research question that initiated the study. In an attempt at answering the research question, reviewing relevant literature to the study was pivotal. Reviewing the relevant literature also identified and shaped the theoretical framework that informed the study. This chapter provides an overview of both local and international literature that was reviewed to explore and gain insight about the nature of the psychosocial challenges such as those faced by FP learners at no-fee schools and to identify the factors that influence the success or failure of the psychosocial support approaches offered. It must however be mentioned that there is a paucity of literature on psychosocial challenges faced by FP learners in a South African context, though much has been written about the psychosocial challenges faced by learners in the adolescent phase of life. Thus, the gap in literature has further motivated the study.

This chapter discusses various factors such as the impact of South Africa's political history in under-resourced communities, contextual psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners, South Africa's education system and the psychosocial support offered by the Department of Basic Education, including psychosocial support offered as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also explores the meaning and types of psychosocial support and psychosocial barriers or challenges as well as recommendations for psychosocial support approaches. Additionally, the theoretical framework informing the study, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model as well as Erikson's psychosocial development theory, are also explored in this chapter, giving insight on how different interrelated systems and life stages influence the development of the learner.

2.2 The impact of South Africa's political history in under-resourced communities

South Africa today is the most unequal country in the world and these inequities are mirrored in the education system due to the historical links between education and the labour market (Spaull & Jansen, 2019, p. 1) as the poor receive an inferior quality of education, which consequently disadvantages them in the labour market (Spaull, 2013). South Africa's Apartheid ideology through its legislative Acts had various negative effects on its citizens in terms of education, work, health and welfare, politics and other social implications (Swartz-

Filies, 2017). For most South Africans the reality of poverty and unemployment precipitates strong psychological challenges that stems from the history of unequal education and economic opportunities in the country (Mmotlane, Winnaar & Wa Kivilu, 2009).

Spaull and Jansen (2019, p.4) state that two South Africa's coexist within the same borders, poverty and privilege living side by side. According to Schotte, Zizzamia and Leibbrandt (2018), the smaller group of about 20-25% are urban, multiracial, educated and employed, having access to quality schools and stable employment and by contrast, the second tier who makes up more than 75% of society are subject to sustained unemployment and/or precarious work with few long-term benefits. This group is made up of largely Black and Coloured South Africans who own no assets and whose children are confined to low-quality no-fee schools (Van der Berg et al., 2011).

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), published by Statistics South Africa (2021), the official unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2021 was 32,6%, with the national food poverty line at R585, which refers to the minimum amount of money that an individual will need to cover the cost of basic needs. Thus, an indication of the state of income poverty, which in turn is inter-related to other multiple forms of vulnerabilities that impact negatively on children's health, education and employment prospects (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Moreover, the recent unrest in South Africa has highlighted the extremes of inequity that still persists in the South African society, with a minority of its society regarded as wealthy and the majority of its people living in chronic poverty (Mckaiser, 2021).

In many poor communities in South Africa, the great majority of learners are receiving less than their right in a democratic South Africa and worse still, is the fact that this will have long-term effects on their opportunities for academic growth, their capabilities and their lives (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). The Cape Metropole is no exception, research based on the Western Cape indicates that people experience challenges across multiple aspects of their lives (De Lannoy et al., 2018). In the Cape Metropole, people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds indicated that crime, violence, trauma, a lack of mentors and other social ills in their households or broader communities such as substance abuse and gangsterism cause a sense of unhappiness and isolation (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Savahl et al., 2015). Consequently, the children from these communities, continue to experience the debilitating effects of poverty and inequality for as long as these problems persist (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2005). Moreover, these disadvantaged children are likely to

do poorly in school and subsequently have low incomes, high fertility, and provide poor care for their own children in the future, thus contributing to the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Grantham-McGregor, Cheung, Cueto, Glewwe, & Strupp, 2007; Jensen, Berens & Nelson, 2017).

Phitidis (2020, p. 19) states that even though apartheid was abolished two decades ago, the life chances of the average South African child are not determined by their ability, but rather by the colour of their skin, their birthplace and the wealth of their parents. Furthermore, Spaull and Jansen (2019, p. 1) state that the challenging realities faced by children in under-resourced communities are so deterministic that it can predict whether or not the child will inherit a life of chronic poverty and sustained unemployment or a dignified life of meaningful work before they reach the age of seven years. Therefore Grantham-McGregor et al., (2007); Haq (2013); Adelman and Taylor (2021) emphasise that the physical and social environment of a child is important for the child's growth and development as poverty can expose young children to multiple risks which renders unstimulating home environments that detrimentally affect their cognitive, motor and social-emotional development. Haq (2013) further suggests that evaluating the developmental opportunities available in a child's environment is key to screening children in need as well as assessing the effectiveness of Early Childhood Development interventions, which aim to enhance a child's environment. Moreover, the South African Child Gauge 2021/2022, which focuses on child and adolescent mental health, states that the mental health of children is deeply rooted in the environments in which they live, thus their well-being is often scoured by psychosocial risk factors such as poverty, violence, discrimination and the exploitation of human and natural resources (Kleintjes et al., 2022).

2.3 Clarification of key terms

2.3.1 Foundation phase

The FP in Wales refers to learners aged 3 – 7 years (Wainwright et al., 2020), whilst in the United Kingdom formal schooling between the age range 5 – 11 years is referred as the primary stage or key stage 1 and 2 (Bright world education, 2019). In the United States the FP of schooling is referred to as K-3 or kindergarten to third grade (Pianta, Downer & Hamre, 2016). In South Africa, the Department of Basic Education regards grades R – 3, which caters for learners between the ages of 6 to 9 years as the FP or the first formal schooling years of the South African schooling system (DBE, 2012).

2.3.2 Psychosocial

The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2014), states that the term *psychosocial* refers to positive connections between individuals in a community, which brings about mutually beneficial and supportive relationships ("social") as well as how each individual, adult or child, feels and thinks about themselves and life ("psycho"). Mahembe (2012) states that *psychosocial* can be defined as the social aspects that influence an individual's adjustment and behaviour. Mahembe (2012) further alludes that psychological factors, which include self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-concept and cultural accommodation, relate to the way that an individual's mind works and how it subsequently affects their behaviour. On the other hand, social factors such as language, culture and peer relations have to do with the determinants of the quality of peoples' lives. Newman and Newman (2017) summarise the concept *psychosocial* as the interaction between the biological, psychological and societal systems. The biological system comprises the processes needed for physical functioning of the organism and for mental activity, thus recognizing and processing social stimulation; the psychological system encompasses the mental processes such as emotion, memory, perception, motivation as well as thinking and reasoning thereby internalizing and assigning unique meaning to social events, whilst the societal system generates the contexts for social interactions and initiates values and priorities for social behavior (Newman & Newman, 2017).

2.3.3 Psychosocial barriers

The term *psychosocial challenges* or *barriers* is a fairly new term and it forms part of the umbrella concept, barriers to learning (DBE, 2014). Barriers to learning can be defined as difficulties that arise at home, in the classroom, or in the community, which prevent access to learning or hinders development (DBE, 2014). Barriers to learning may include socio-economic aspects such as lack of access to basic services, poverty and under-development, physical, emotional and sexual abuse, inappropriate and inadequate provision of support services, lack of parental recognition and involvement and disability (DBE, 2014). Similarly, Setlhare, Wood and Meyer (2016) describe psychosocial challenges or barriers as context specific and often interrelated within the socioeconomic reality of under-resourced communities in South Africa. Nel and Grosser (2016) allude that defining learning barriers in a South African context is multifaceted as the term encompasses both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to learning. Intrinsic risk factors that impact on an individual's learning and development includes the biologically (psycho) determined factors whilst the extrinsic factors refer to the environmental (social) factors (Daniels, 2013; Nel, Engelbrecht, Nel and

Tlale, 2016 Adelman and Taylor 2021). Donald et al., (2016, p. 22) caution that the intrinsic and extrinsic factors should not be interpreted independently as they inevitably reinforce one another. Similarly, Mahlo, (2017) as well as De Lannoy et al., (2018) state that barriers to learning encompass systemic barriers, societal barriers, pedagogic barriers and intrinsic barriers, which cannot be addressed in isolation as they interact in a dynamic way. Moreover, some barriers to learning that affect many South African children and make them vulnerable are poverty, violence and abuse at home or at school, poor access to services and poor infrastructure at school such as insufficient classrooms (DBE, 2014; Nel and Grosser, 2016). The most prominent social barriers in South Africa include poverty, various forms of abuse and high crime rates (Daniels, 2013; Hlalele, 2012; Chetty, 2015).

2.3.4 Psychosocial support

The Department of Basic Education (2014, p. 38) defines psychosocial support as "the care provided to children and educators who have additional emotional, mental and social needs as a result of having experienced trauma in their lives, such as extreme poverty, the loss of a parent or caregiver, illness or death of a close family member or exposure to violence." Similarly, Donald et al., (2016) state that psychosocial support refers to the provision of care and support in response to emotional, mental and social needs. Hlalele (2012) as well as Kaljee et al., (2017) allude that psychosocial support is an ongoing process that addresses physical, educational, emotional, social and spiritual needs, as these are regarded as key elements of meaningful and positive human development that will enable individuals, families and communities to cope with adversity. International research describes psychosocial support as a process that enables resilience within individuals, families and communities and encourages the restoration of social cohesion (Inter-Agency Network of Education in Emergencies [INEE], 2016). Also, psychosocial support is a strategic plan that helps individuals whose lives have been disrupted due to a crisis or after experiencing adversities to recover and to enhance their ability to return to normality (INEE, 2018). Eloff and Swart (2018) highlight the importance of education as a psychosocial intervention or support mechanism in developing le arner resilience as learners acquire knowledge and skills such as decision-making and conflict resolution that equip them to navigate psychosocial challenges more effectively when faced with it. Through education and more specifically, the Life Skills/Orientation curriculum, learners are taught about their rights and responsibilities and how to respond in high-risk situations, though it should be noted that all teachers, not only Life Orientation teachers, have to play a part in the process of building positive psychosocial outcomes for children affected by psychosocial challenges (Eloff &

Swart, 2018). Although teachers are required to provide first-level psychosocial support to leaners in need, they form part of a multidisciplinary team of professionals, which include psychologists, social workers, traditional healers, faith-based leaders as well as community elders and leaders. In this way, sensitivity is exercised towards the cultural differences within South Africa's diverse context (Eloff & Swart, 2018).

Moreover, the rights of children to access psychosocial support is mandated by various pieces of legislation, most notably, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (1996) and The Children's Act No.38 of 2005, which states that children have the right to protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation, sound psychological, intellectual, emotional and social development as well as protection from psychological harm caused by traumatic experiences. Additionally, the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) policy (DBE, 2014) also stipulates the right of children experiencing psychosocial problems to access equal opportunities, attend and complete their schooling and develop to their full potential (DBE, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, psychosocial support refers to the care provided to children who have additional emotional, mental and social needs as a result of having experienced trauma in their lives such as extreme poverty or exposure to violence (DBE, 2014).

2.4 Contextual psychosocial challenges experienced by school-going aged children

Childhood marks the foundation of any person's personality and emotional resilience capacity, therefore it is a critical period in the life of any human being (UNICEF, 2021). From a development perspective, learners in the FP, Grades 1 – 3, should be exposed to enrichment experiences that promote well-being (Reynolds, Ou, Mondi & Giovanelli, 2019). In South Africa, however the history of childhood and adolescence in many cases is characterised by social oppression, inequality, poverty, exposure to various forms of violence, abuse and neglect (Savahl et al., 2015). Many young children in South Africa are negatively impacted by various social and economic inequalities, which deprive most of them of their fundamental socio-economic rights, including access to health care, education, social services and nutrition (Atmore, van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper, 2012). Moreover, South Africa is referred to as a country where children have equal rights under the Constitution, but the social contexts into which they are born and their opportunities in life are very unequal (UNICEF, 2019). Consequently, Casale (2015) asserts that mental and social

health cannot be considered without taking into account the social dimension of health and well-being, deriving from social relations and interaction.

Donald et al., (2016) state that conditions of poverty are a primary extrinsic factor that is linked to many barriers to learning. Furthermore, a monetary approach to poverty has been used to indicate child poverty, as such, a child is considered poor if he/she lives in a household whose income or expenditure is below a given poverty line, whilst a child can also be identified as multidimensionally poor if they are living in a household where they are deprived of at least three out of seven dimensions of poverty such as housing, nutrition, education, health, protection, information, water and sanitation (Statistics South Africa, 2020). In South Africa 62,1% children aged 0-17 years were identified as multidimensionally poor and although higher levels of multidimensional child poverty were found in predominantly rural provinces, the Western Cape accounts for 37,1% (Statistics South Africa 2020).

Moreover, the main contributors to the state of poverty of children in the primary childhood development phase (5-12 years) are unsatisfactory education and housing circumstances, which consequently hinders their physical, psychological and social development (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Likewise, Moore, McDonald and McHugh-Dillon (2014) reiterate that poverty and housing are the two factors that significantly impact on a child's development and family well-being as poverty is associated with experiences of social exclusion, violence and trauma, which can heighten stress and may increase the risk and severity of mental illness (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Additionally, Manuel et al., (2020) are of the opinion that one of the most devastating effects of apartheid, that are transmitted across generations, on the psychological well-being of children is the destruction of self-esteem, aspirations and hope for the future. Therefore, children living in poverty who do not reach their developmental potential are less likely to be productive adults (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the development of competence and autonomy depend on the daily environments that a child is exposed to. Therefore, prolonged exposure to non-stimulating or disadvantaged environments can have adverse long-term effects on children's development (Moore et al., 2014; Jensen et al., 2017). Likewise, Adelman and Taylor (2021) affirm that most families living in poverty are unable to expose their children to school preparatory experiences, as they simply do not have the resources. Additionally, Donald et

al. (2016, p.183) allude that many barriers to learning and a range of social problems are directly or indirectly caused by poverty and sadly these barriers will inevitably cause further poverty. Children living in poverty that are attending public schools that offer poor quality education often experience learning backlogs and grade repetitions which are the main reasons for school drop-out at a later stage (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Adelman & Taylor, 2021).

Parents, and even more so, parents in low socio-economic communities have a pivotal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school and that they do their homework, however many of these parents did not complete schooling and therefore can't read or write properly or they have to work long hours due to their circumstances and are unable to participate in their children's schooling (Modisaotsile, 2012; Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2019). Poverty thus poses developmental risk factors that can disrupt a child's healthy neural development and adversely impacts the achievement of early developmental milestones such as language development and cognitive capacities (Jensen et al., 2017). Therefore, the importance of offering effective psychosocial support at school level to such affected learners to ensure that they are given the opportunity to develop to their full potential and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

2.5 South Africa's education system during and post-Apartheid

The previous education system prior to 1994, governed by the apartheid regime, was split into multiple racially defined departments, which provided different types and qualities of education based on a particular race group and the perceived role of that group in the apartheid society (Spaull, 2013). Also, in providing support for learners who experienced learning barriers, the Apartheid education system did not follow a holistic supportive approach and in so doing overlooked the person-context interaction, which limited the social development of the learner (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). The current South African education system, under the democratic dispensation, post 1994, consists of two parallel education systems, one encompasses private schools and fee-charging public schools whilst the other system is made up of no-fee schools, which are attended by three-quarters of South African children (Phitidis, 2020, p. 19).

The democratic government abolished the racially defined departments and established nine provincial Departments of Education, which functioned in collaboration with a single

national Department of Education (Spaull, 2013). Despite the transition to democracy, inequality is rife in South Africa. Spaull and Jansen (2019, p. 2) describe the inequities in South Africa as a tragic petri dish that shows how politics and policy interact with unequal starting conditions that preserve a system of poverty and privilege and these visible extremes illustrate the manner in which inequality manifests itself in a schooling system. Changing South Africa's education system from a segregated apartheid system to an inclusive education system has experienced many challenges (Modisaotsile, 2012; Setlhare et al., 2016).

Schools in poor communities in South Africa are facing crises of inefficiency and inequality (Damons & Cherrington, 2020). The South African schooling system struggles with the legacy of Apartheid; however, it is also evident that there are policy choices and fiscal capacity within the current government to alter that legacy (Spaull & Jansen 2019, p. 369). Although other low and middle-income countries face educational inequalities, the levels and patterns in South Africa are extreme and stems from apartheid oppression (Spaull & Jansen, 2019, p. 4). Over the past two decades many demographic changes, restructuring and reforms were implemented in South Africa, however its education system is still hampered by high levels of socio-economic inequality and poor levels of academic achievement in schools located in low socioeconomic communities, comprising the majority of the South African population (Jansen & Blank 2014; Spaull, 2013). Even though there is improvement in school enrollment rates for South African children, the country continues to face serious challenges regarding the effectiveness of its education system (Timaæus, Simelane & Letsoalo, 2013). The ratio of learners to teachers is too high, as one teacher is responsible to educate at least 35 or more young minds and this can be a challenging task; hence some learners unfortunately fall through the cracks in the system (Modisaotsile, 2012). Schools are important settings for programmes that encourage health promotion of children, young adults, their families and their community, and could produce a positive contribution to the overall psychosocial health of society (Daniels, 2016).

Key policies and regulatory frameworks of education, which focus on interventions that offer support and promote the development of health and well-being of all learners have been established in order to work towards building a democratic society in South Africa (Daniels, 2016). Although schools have been identified as ideal settings to support children's mental health and development, many underfunded schools in low socio-economic communities do not have adequate physical and social-emotional environments or resources to shield

children from the influence of cumulative risk factors (Cappella, Frazier, Atkins, Schoenwald & Glisson, 2008).

2.5.1 Psychosocial support offered by the Department of Basic Education

The DBE has identified psychosocial support as a priority area (DBE, 2014). The positive psychosocial health of Grades 1 to 3 learners, which refers to learners in the FP, requires a broad network of social support from family, community, peers and caregivers (Casale, 2015; Sadie, 2018). The FP of schooling is critical as it lays the building blocks of learners' development which includes intellectual, mental, emotional, physical and social growth (Mahlo, 2017). The implementation of policies and programmes developed to access healthcare, education and psychosocial support networks as well as elevate resilience will enhance such protective factors (Kaljee et al., 2017).

The Department of Basic Education advocates inclusion of all school-going age children at all schools to ensure that they perform optimally and in addition offer support to educators enabling them to continue with the important roles that they play in the lives of children (DBE, 2014). Ensuring that learners receive effective support cannot however be an isolated responsibility of teachers, although they play an important part to support all learners, including those who experience barriers to learning (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). Thus, the South African education system has support structures that can offer holistic and integrated learner support by means of intersectoral collaboration. In collaboration with government departments and other institutions, the DBE encourages schools to refer learners needing psychosocial support to specialists such as educational psychologists and occupational therapists (DBE, 2014). To ensure that such a referral network is effective, the District-Based Support Teams (DBSTs) were established as one of the support structures (DBE, 2014; SIAS, 2014; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016; Nel, Tlale, Engelbrecht & Nel, 2016). The DBSTs should include psychologists, counselors, therapists, social workers and other healthcare workers employed by the DBE, non-governmental or community-based organisations, various learning support personnel and education department officials providing administrative, curricular and institutional development support at district level (DBE, 2014; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016; Donald et al., 2016 p. 27).

The core function of the DBSTs is to provide integrated professional support services at district level, thereby assisting schools to identify and address barriers to learning and in so

doing promote effective teaching and learning (DBE, 2014). At school level, the SBST consisting of a LST, the school principal and an educator was established as a school-level support mechanism to co-ordinate school, learner and teacher support and to refer support requests that requires specialist intervention to the DBSTs (SIAS, 2014). The DBSTs should therefore endeavor to collect comprehensive information of all interacting factors influencing the immediate environment of a learner who is experiencing barriers to learning (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016).

Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education implemented the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) programme in an attempt to alleviate the different barriers to learning experienced by learners (DBE, 2014). The CSTL programme regards psychosocial support as a priority action area It thus attempts to offer the much-needed care and support in response to the emotional, mental and social needs of learners and educators in order to create a safe and supportive learning environment (DBE, 2014). The CSTL programme provides a framework to deal with context-specific barriers that hinders the ability of children to access school, to complete schooling and to reach their potential through activities that create an inclusive, socially cohesive school environment, promoting the rights of children and addressing social exclusion (DBE, 2014). The Department of Basic Education firmly stipulates in the CSTL handbook that schools must provide psychosocial support for learners, ensure an effective referral process for learners who experience psychosocial challenges and provide psychosocial support training to educators to assist learners in need (DBE, 2014). Additionally, improved nutrition, early identification and implementation of interventions to address health barriers to learning, access to counseling and referral to other services also form part of the CSTL programme (DBE, 2014).

The South African government has also committed to reinstating health programmes in public schools in South Africa, to ensure that ill health and other challenges do not prevent learners from achieving their full potential (DBE, 2012). Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) states that a school health programme improves the leaning capabilities of learners as it offers a combination of services that ensure the physical, mental and social well-being of learners (DBE, 2012). The Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP) was therefore developed to indicate the responsibility of the respective departments in addressing the health needs of learners (DBE, 2012). The ISHP is twofold as it seeks to address the immediate health problems of learners, which encompass those that constitute barriers to learning and in addition, render interventions that can lead to good health and

well-being during both childhood and adulthood (DBE, 2012). The Department of Basic Education acknowledges that providing the necessary support in the formative years of schooling is important as it will enhance the learning outcomes and development of learners in need (DBE, 2012). The ISHP thus makes provision for learner assessment and screening at least once during each of the educational phases; the assessments during the FP centers around identifying health barriers to learning, as well as identifying children who have or are at risk of chronic health, psychosocial or other problems (DBE, 2012).

2.5.2 Challenges in providing psychosocial support in South African public schools

Limited support services, poor infrastructure, inadequately trained teachers and large class sizes have been identified as contributing factors that hinders the reality of South Africa's education system to become fully inclusive (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016; Nel et al., 2016). For example, one psychologist is assigned to service approximately 40 schools within an education district in the WCED, therefore there is often a long delay before learners receive such support (Daniels 2013). According to Skovdal and Campbell (2015) teachers working in low resource contexts provide learners with food, clothes and psychosocial support at their own cost. Likewise, Nel et al., (2016) and Setlhare et al., (2016) state that the learner support offered by teachers fall within the limitations of their own knowledge, skills and resources. Additionally, due to limited training sessions on how to effectively implement policy documents on barriers to learning in the classroom, it is not yet evident whether teachers understand how to practically execute the process (Donald et al., 2010; Mahlo, 2017; Ayaya, Makoelle & van der Merwe, 2020). Similarly, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) as well as the South African Child Gauge stated that in South Africa, the legislative and policy environment for psychosocial health and well-being is present but fragmented and inequitable (Namome et al., 2021; Skeen et al., 2022). Moreover, Mahlo (2017) indicated that learners experience more social problems than academic problems and if such learners do not receive the relevant support they might find it challenging to cope academically. Consequently, learners in need of support drop out of school, as they do not receive effective support that will enable them to achieve their full potential (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016). Hlalele (2012) reiterates that psychosocial support definitely adds value to the lives of vulnerable learners, however it is currently neither effective nor consistent, particularly in low socioeconomic communities. Therefore Net et al., (2016); Reynolds et al.,

(2019); Skae, Brown and Wilmot (2020) allude that an adaptable curriculum is needed that is responsive to the different learning needs experienced by learners.

2.5.3 Psychosocial support offered during COVID-19 by the WCED

The COVID-19 pandemic has an immense impact on the psychosocial well-being of societies across the globe and although it has a different effect on different societal groups, children find it more difficult to comprehend and deal with the changes that this pandemic brought about (UNICEF, 2021). During the COVID-19 lockdown, school closures and restriction of movement resulted in children having limited access to socialization and interaction with their peers, which impacted their psychosocial wellbeing negatively, as constrained access to socialization can lead to frustration and anxiety (UNICEF, 2021). Similarly, the HSRC reported that COVID-19 impacted negatively on children's emotional state and behaviour as they are experiencing feelings of loneliness, nervousness, irritability and loss of concentration (Namome, et al., 2021). Furthermore, due to stressors experienced by parents, caregivers and other members of communities brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, public health emergency services have alluded to the strong possibility of an increase in gender-based violence, domestic violence and corporal punishment against children, which will also impact negatively on their psychosocial wellbeing (UNICEF, 2021). It is therefore important to review the accessibility and enhancement of psychosocial support offered to children in order to mitigate the impact of the psychosocial challenges that they face in all spheres of their lives.

According to an article by Equal Education, the DBE indicated its unpreparedness for the high demand of psychosocial support in school settings due to the effects of COVID-19 and acknowledged the need to work with the Department of Social Development (DSD) to provide much needed psychosocial support to learners and educators (Cyster, 2021). In an attempt to offer psychosocial support to schools, due to the effects of the pandemic, the education district psychologists and social workers liaised in a collaborative approach with school-based counselors, and other relevant stakeholders to support schools (teachers and learners) affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (WCED, 2020). Psychosocial support to schools by the DBST is prioritised according to the level of support needed and is offered in collaboration with the Employee Health and Wellness Programme in the form of staff debriefing sessions, one-on-one confidential sessions with counselors, learner check-in activity and conducting a baseline classroom psychosocial survey (WCED, 2020).

Additionally, COVID-19 awareness, which includes the causes, treatment, hygiene and wellness practices has been incorporated into Life Skills/Orientation lessons (WCED, 2020). The HSRC of South Africa has however indicated a policy gap in the psychosocial and well-being programming in schools (Sobane, Gastrow & Oosthuizen (2021); Namome, Winnaar & Arends, 2021). According to the HSRC, the DBE recovery plan is present and commendable, but lacks clear and precise strategies and guidelines for psychosocial well-being (Namome, et al., 2021). Furthermore, a number of South African schools are in need of psychosocial support as the psychosocial effects associated with COVID-19 cannot be ignored, however intervention policies focusing on psychosocial support do not adequately indicate effective strategies that will aid the severe impact of disasters such as COVID-19; hence the policies should be reviewed (Namome et al., 2021).

2.5.4 Psychosocial support theories

This study explores the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners and it further seeks to analyse if the psychosocial support offered to the affected learners is effective. There are many theories that explain human development and the contextual challenges that can arise throughout the human development process. One such theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), is a macrotheory of human motivation, development and health (Deci & Ryan, 2008). SDT has been applied within various life domains such as health and education (Deci & Ryan, 2000; 2008). Furthermore, SDT focuses on issues such as personality development challenges, self-regulation, innate psychological needs, the impact of social environments, behavior and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), the social conditions in which human beings develop and function impacts their self-motivation, social functioning and psychological development. SDT uses experimental paradigms, to identify the conditions that enhance people's natural activity and constructiveness, as well as conditions that promote a lack of self-motivation and social integration (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory emphasizes that motivation is at the core of biological, cognitive and social regulation, it encompasses energy, direction and persistence and more importantly, it produces (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Also, motivation satisfies the basic psychological needs for competence (leading to a sense of accomplishment), autonomy (meaningful and engagement pursuits) and relatedness (experienced through positive relationships), which enable a sense of well-being in all cultures and it is important for optimal functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2008). It is therefore important that teachers, parents and other learner support role-players apply the notion of

motivation as a construct that will enable FP learners to develop optimally and rise above the psychosocial challenges that they experience. Similarly, (Niemiec, 2022) alludes that in a need-supportive educational context teachers can influence learners' motivation and experiences in the classroom by integrating self-determination theory with their teaching methods, thereby mitigating learners' vulnerabilities.

In addition, embedded in the framework of social cognitive theory is the notion of self-efficacy (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Social cognitive theory encompasses processes that enable people to build a sense of resilience that impact on the quality of psychosocial functioning (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Self-efficacy influences human functioning through cognitive, motivational, affective and decisional processes; thus, enabling individuals to think in self-enhancing ways (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Self-efficacy therefore guides individuals to take initiative in mending their lives instead of allowing the adverse circumstances that they experience, dictate their lives (Benight & Bandura, 2004). Furthermore, McLaughlin (2018) states that a key facet of education is to enhance mental health and well-being, and self-efficacy influences well-being, hence it is important that children are given the scope to develop self-efficacy as it is an integral part of their psychosocial development.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework can be viewed as the scaffolding or underlying structure of a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This structure stems from reviewing previous literature related to the research as well as the writer's understanding of the theoretical or philosophical perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1986), as it offers in depth insight on how a child's immediate contextual environment and other external processes shape human development. This study also explores Erikson's psychosocial development theory (1968) that sheds light on the notion of a 'prearranged sequence' of psychosocial human development.

2.6.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological model

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model illuminates how different levels of inter-related systems in the social context influence child development (Donald et al., 2016). The model indicates that the inter-related systems can bring about change, growth and development, thus a change in one system will have a reciprocal effect on the other systems (Mahembe, 2012). There are four inter-related systems imbedded in the ecological model namely, the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem and all of these interact with the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). This study seeks to understand the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners within a particular context and how the psychosocial support offered can be enhanced to enable them to develop optimally. Therefore, it is important to gain a deeper understanding of how a child's development is nested in and influenced by the inter-related systems and how the interactions between these systems can guide the development of psychosocial support structures.

The microsystem is described as the innermost structure that includes the people with whom the child has proximal interactions with or is closely related to such as the family, home, siblings or peers (Krishnan, 2010; Donald et al., 2016, p. 46; Nel et al., 2016). A child's cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development is shaped by the relationships and patterns of daily activities that occur in the microsystem (Donald et al., 2016, p. 46). Bronfenbrenner (1986) states that these relationships are bi-directional as the adults influence the child's development and vice versa. The microsystem includes everyday activities that form many aspects of cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development (Mahlo & Hugo, 2013). Krishnan (2010) further indicates that nutrition, parenting style, demographic and socioeconomic statuses of parents are micro-level variables that influence early child development. Similarly, Mahlo and Hugo (2013) indicate that family environments that include unsupportive parents, neglected children, single parent households, loss of a parent(s), dysfunctional families, abusive households and learners coming to school hungry due to unemployed parents, are contributing micro-level variables that result in barriers to learning. With reference to this study, the psychosocial challenges that some FP learners are experiencing can be associated with the micro-level variables in their immediate context. An example of a psychosocial support structure in the micro system that alleviates barriers to learning associated with hunger and malnutrition, thus contributing positively to the psychosocial development of children, is the Nutritional support programme offered to quintile 1,2 and 3 public school learners nationally (DBE, 2014). Furthermore, the aim of the nutritional support programme is to elevate the learning capacity of learners by

providing them with a nutritious meal daily, creating a safe supportive learning environment, educating them on sustainable food production initiatives, such as vegetable gardens, promoting healthy lifestyles and to become a responsible and successful citizen (DBE, 2014). In addition, the deworming programme for learners, which forms part of the DBE's health promotion initiative, also impacts positively on the development of learners (DBE, 2014). According to Nel et al., (2016) the microsystem is nested in the mesosystem, which is the second system or layer in the ecological model.

The mesosystem is referred to as the 'neighbourhood' or the 'local community' and is regarded as an external environmental system that consists of a set of microsystems that continuously interact with each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Donald et al., 2016, p. 46). The mesosystem can serve as sources of external influence on the family and consequently the development of a child. Therefore, whatever the situation at home, will impact the child's progress or development at school and vice versa as the different settings that the family interacts in are not independent from each other. The reciprocal interaction between the family, school, peers, teacher or school counselor forms part of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). It is however important that the interaction between the micro and mesosystems are effective as it affects the child's ability to develop to his or her full potential (Nel et al., 2016). Accordingly, Donald et al., (2016, p. 46) state that if a child experiences an event that results in feelings of fear or anxiety and lacks support from his or her family, the interactions with a teacher or school counselor who can provide effective support or more specifically psychosocial support may over time change the learner's sense of fear, anxiety or insecurity. Thus, the mesosystem also includes the support processes facilitated by the SBST's such as curriculum support, co-curricular support, counseling as well as safety and protection, which are stipulated in the Care and support for teaching and learning (CSTL) document. Furthermore, the SIAS (2014) policy provides clarity regarding the support referral pathway for learners in need of support in the South African education system, (Nel et al., 2016). This study, focuses, inter alia, on the enhancement of psychosocial support offered to affected learners, specifically at a no-fee school, therefore the importance of understanding how the relevant role-players execute these policies in practice to ensure its effectiveness, from the FP educators in identifying and supporting learners experiencing psychosocial challenges, to the LST together with the SBST, supporting the FP educator(s) and affected learner(s) and developing an individual support plan (ISP) for the affected learner(s) as well as starting the referral process if further support is required from the DBST. In addition, and more specifically, Krishnan (2010) and (Mahlo

& Hugo, 2013) highlight the importance of parental involvement in the child's schooling in order for the mesosystem to function effectively; thus, enhancing the child's development. Likewise, Nel et al., (2016) reiterate the importance of support in the mesosystem as the reciprocal relationships or interactions between the home, siblings, family, peers and school contribute to the holistic development of the child. Risk factors or challenges that can delay the effectiveness of support provision within the mesosystem include large class sizes, insufficient budgets and resources and long waiting lists for placements (Smit, Preston & Hay, 2020).

The exosystem refers to the level in which the child is not directly involved, but includes other systems that have proximal relationships with the child's microsystems such as the parents' or caregiver's workplace (Donald et al., 2016). The development of the child is therefore not only influenced by what happens in the levels or environments that the child directly interacts in, but also in other environments in which their parents are directly involved in (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). With reference to the South African education system and this study, the DBST's forms part of the exosystem, which is regarded as an influential system as it creates a bridging area between the provincial departments and the mesosystem (SBST's), as the provincial departments liaise with the DBST's to ensure that the role-players within the DBST's function in accordance with national and provincial legislation, directed by the DBE (DBE, 2014; Smit et al., 2020). For example, in cases where learners experience psychosocial barriers and require psychosocial support due to the severity of the case, the SBST will follow the referral process as stipulated in the SIAS (DBE, 2014) policy in order for such cases to be successfully referred to the DBST who will ensure that the much needed and most efficient support is provided to the affected learners (DBE, 2014).

Even though the DBE states that the basis of psychosocial support is creating a supportive classroom environment that allows learners time to speak about their challenges, the DBE encourages schools to refer learners that need psychosocial support to professionals such as educational psychologists and occupational therapists (DBE, 2014). Other key external partners that can assist schools with psychosocial support include the Departments of Social Development and Health that can link learners with social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists (DBE, 2014). Risk factors that may hinder the effective functioning of the DBST includes insufficient budgets or budgets being inconsistently distributed and lack of staff expertise on departmental and district level (Smit et al., 2020). Subsequently,

communication between the DBE (macrosystem), the DBST's (exosystem) and schools (mesosystem) is important as it ensures effective support provision to learners who experience barriers to learning (Smit et al., 2020).

The macrosystem refers to the values, beliefs and practices that affect all other social systems (Donald et al., 2016). With reference to this study the DBE forms part of the macrosystem as it is responsible for legislation, policy drafting, strategic planning and coordination of planning for learners who experience barriers to learning (Smit et al., 2020). The SIAS policy, the CSTL document and the ISHP policy are examples of policies developed and implemented by the DBE to offer guidance to schools regarding intervention support offered to learners who experience barriers to learning, be it academically or psychosocial in nature. Risk factors such as no meaningful strategies, insufficient budget allocation and vacant posts can hamper the effective execution of the aforementioned learner support policies, which will ultimately influence the psychosocial development of learners who experience barriers to learning negatively (Smit et al., 2020).

The Chronosystem refers to how the environment in which a person lives or interacts impacts the person's development over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). Also, the micro, meso, exo and macro systems function within the chronosystem (Smit et al., 2020). For instance, change is inevitable, thus a child's family dynamics or school processes and policies change over time, these changes influence the development of a child (Donald et al., 2016).

2.6.2 Erik Erikson's psychosocial development theory

Erikson's psychosocial theory scaffolds the development of human personality within a social context into eight sequential stages that relate to both psychological and social facets of development (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 108). These stages are: Trust versus mistrust (Infancy), Autonomy versus shame and doubt (Toddler years), Initiative versus guilt (Preschool years), Industry versus inferiority (Elementary school years), Identity versus role confusion (Adolescence), Intimacy versus isolation (Early adulthood), Generativity versus stagnation (Middle adulthood) and Integrity versus despair (Late adulthood) (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 108). According to Donald et al., (2016, p. 85) development is an ongoing process; hence each stage leads to the next stage. This theory suggests that a person experiences a developmental crisis or challenge during each stage and how the person undertakes the particular challenge, influences his or her further development

(Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 110). In order to develop optimally, a person has to navigate each stage successfully (Maree, 2021). If a person did not successfully navigate the challenge of a previous stage, he or she may not develop the emotional strength to cope with the social and emotional challenges at a later stage in life (Batra, 2013).

The psychosocial development of FP learners is central to this study. Therefore, it is important to zoom in on the industry versus inferiority stage, age range 6-12 years, (Elementary school years also referred to as FP in South Africa) in order to better understand how these learners work through the psychosocial challenges that they experience. It is also important to briefly delve into the first three stages of development; Trust versus mistrust (Infancy), Autonomy versus shame and doubt (Toddler years) as well as Initiative versus guilt (Preschool years) to ascertain how the challenges that FP children may have encountered in the previous stages influence their current stage of development and if the psychosocial support offered within the home and school context is effective. Moreover, Erikson's theory also details developmentally appropriate practice or supportive guidance for both parents, educators, school counselors, curriculum developers and policy makers which is pivotal for children's optimal growth including children with learning challenges (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012; Batra, 2013; Saracho, 2023).

The objective during Erikson's first stage of psychosocial development, Trust versus mistrust (Infancy), is that infants develop a sense of basic trust that their caregivers will fulfill their needs for food, security and affection (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 110). Consequently, infants are more likely to develop a sense of trust, hope and resiliency that will enable them to cope with challenges later in life if their immediate caregivers are consistent and dependable, however a child can develop a sense of mistrust which can last into adulthood if parents are inadequate or inconsistent in caring for the infant (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 110; Batra, 2013). Furthermore, a child exposed to poverty, social deprivation and neglect may be withdrawn due to a lack of love, care, feeding and a lack of stimulation (Batra, 2013). According to Erikson (1963, p. 148), the notion of developing a sense of trust indicates not only that one has learned to rely and trust others, but also the ability to regard oneself as trustworthy.

During the second stage, Autonomy versus shame and doubt (Toddler years), children are more mobile, self-sufficient and independent as they go about exploring their immediate environments (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 113). Consequently, it is important that

parents encourage and support their child's autonomous experiences and not be critical of their child's initial mistakes, as supportive feedback will elevate the child's confidence and feelings of capability (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 113). For the safety and developmental well-being of children it is important for parents to set realistic boundaries and offer supportive guidance, however if a child's attempts at self-sufficiency are overly restricted the child can develop feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy, low self-esteem and suppressed potential, which can persist during the following stages of human development (Batra, 2013; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 115).

At this stage, Initiative versus guilt (Preschool years), children develop a sense of initiative and purpose (Erikson, 1963, p. 255). During this stage children want to be involved in everything, hence when children are denied to express a sense of initiative they can experience a sense of guilt, which can lead to continual self-doubt (Batra, 2013). Preschool children develop self-confidence when they are given spaces to demonstrate initiative and make purposeful choices (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 117). Furthermore, parents that criticize their children excessively during this age causes the child to feel a sense guilt, which in turn can cause the child to withdraw from activities and possibly become an inhibited adult (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 117).

The Industry versus inferiority stage focuses on the development of learners between the ages of 6-12 years (Batra, 2013). This stage relates to school-going-age children and during this stage they either develop a sense of competence or feelings of incompetence (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 117). During this stage children acquire context related basic skills that may be needed to work their way through physical, cognitive or social challenges in future (Donald et al, 2016, p. 87). According to Nel (2014, p. 331) children also acquire essential culture related knowledge and skills during this stage. Children become aware that they can get recognition or approval from their parents, teachers, extended family or peers for their achievements from academic tasks to social skills (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 117). Consequently, children feel a sense of industry if they succeeded at these tasks and failure or inferiority if they were unsuccessful (Donald et al., 2016, p.87). During this stage some children might experience a sense of inferiority more often than their peers due to psychosocial challenges caused by their environments that may hinder their development leaving them with a sense of incompetence.

According to Erikson's theory of development, if a child is not able to effectively navigate a challenge in any given stage, it will become a bigger problem in later stages (Maree, 2021). It is therefore important for teachers to create an encouraging classroom environment for all learners (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 118), as this will enhance their ability to achieve proficiency and self-belief (Maree, 2021). Similarly, Batra (2013) states that thoughtful pedagogy should not only stimulate the mind, but also offer the spaces that are necessary for the healthy growth of children's social and emotional experiences. For example, children interpret everyday experiences such as interaction with family or the broader social community, exposure to technology, playing as well as reading and writing as an opportunity to realize a developmental need for social engagement and problem solving relevant to their age, hence when they are not given the psychological and social space to experience a sense of initiative, children develop self-doubt, which can have a negative impact on their self-esteem if it persists (Batra, 2013). Also, through effective integration of Erikson's insights, his framework can provide the connection between the growing-up needs of children including that of children with learning difficulties and their education as it suggests experiential and inclusive teaching and learning that is enduring, authentic, creative and expansive (Batra, 2013).

This developmental stage thus brings about the need for effective psychosocial support strategies that will enable children to navigate their way through consistent feelings of incompetence to understanding and nurturing their skills and abilities. Maree (2021) further alludes that with the availability of effective support programmes within the education system learners will be able to work through the psychosocial challenges in their lives, which will be different from one cultural context to another.

2.6.3 How do the two theories complement each other in relation to this study?

This study focuses on the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners and it further explores how the support offered to these learners can be enhanced. In so doing, it is necessary to zoom in on the similarities between the two theories in order to highlight how the two theories complement each other in relation to this study. Both Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory and Erikson's psychosocial development theory recognises that child development happens over time and that it is influenced by cultural, psychological and societal factors (Erikson, 1963, p. 260; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Saracho, 2023). Like Bronfenbrenner's systems framework that considers family, schools and other settings that influence child development, Erikson's stages of development are also characterized by the

child's home environment, culture as well as how the child was raised and educated (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Maree, 2021). Thus, both theories create awareness of the factors that impacts child development and in so doing it enables educators, school counselors and other relevant role-players to gain a better understanding of the child's development challenges. Also, both theories clarify why it is important that educators undertake an active role in constructing mentally healthy classroom environments that creates a space for learners to express their feelings without feeling embarrassed or afraid of being criticized (Maree, 2021; Saracho, 2023). Moreover, both theories also clarify and highlight the importance of establishing an education system with effective supportive structures in place, both in policy and practice (Saracho, 2023) in order to assist FP learners that struggle with psychosocial challenges, which hinder their ability to develop to their full potential.

2.7 Conclusion

The inequalities embedded in South Africa's political history is still evident in past and current literature and it is still mirrored in low socioeconomic communities across South Africa including the Cape Metropole. The literature reviewed shows that unemployment and consequently poverty are key risk factors that are associated with crime, violence and substance abuse, which negatively impacts on the immediate environment of a child. The body of research also indicates that such risk factors can result in psychosocial challenges that negatively influence the child's development.

The policies formulated by the Department of Education that guide the support processes for learners experiencing psychosocial support should be regarded as a protective factor as its purpose is to effectively enable these learners to develop to their full potential. As indicated by Bronfenbrenner and Erikson's child development theories, effective psychosocial support is pivotal, however the support process can only be successful if there is positive interaction between all relevant role-players.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to understand the psychosocial challenges that FP learners at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole experience and to identify how the psychosocial support provided to the affected learners could be enhanced. This study was guided by a basic qualitative approach. This chapter outlines the research methodology employed for this study.

3.2 Research question and sub-questions:

Main research question

- What is the nature of support provided to FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges at a no-fee school in the Cape Metropole?

Sub-questions:

- What types of psychosocial challenges do FP learners experience at the no-fee school?
- What support is provided to address the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at the no-fee school?
- How can the psychosocial support given to FP learners at the no-fee school be enhanced?

Next follows a discussion of the research paradigm that guided this study.

3.3 Research paradigm

A paradigm is referred to as a set of basic beliefs (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107), in the same way it may also be viewed as the net that holds the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological principles (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p.31). Ontology relates to the researcher's nature of reality, whilst epistemology refers to how the researcher knows what he or she knows. Methodology refers to the methods used in the research process, (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Furthermore, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.108) allude that a researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological beliefs are interconnected to

the extent that the answer given to any one question, in any order, compels how the remaining questions may be answered. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p.107) list the following as three defining questions that reflects a logical primacy; firstly, “What is the form and nature of reality and what is there that can be known about it?” (Ontological) and secondly, “What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be-knower and what can be known?” (Epistemological) and lastly “How can the would-be-knower go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known?” (Methodological). Thus, the researcher interprets the world with a set of beliefs or a framework that encompasses his or her ontology, epistemology and methodology. Consequently Creswell (2013, p. 18) states that paradigms or worldviews used by researchers may differ depending on the set of beliefs they bring to research. Different research paradigms include positivism, postpositivism, critical theory and constructivism/interpretivism. This study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 43) the researcher’s set of beliefs or interpretive framework as well as feelings about the world and the researcher’s understanding thereof, deems all research interpretive. Social constructivism also referred to as interpretivism is a worldview or paradigm where individuals make subjective meanings of their lived experiences, thus the objective of the research is to rely on the participants views about the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 24). Constructivism thus takes on a relativist ontology, suggesting that realities are multiple, intangible mental constructions based on individuals’ social experiences and it employs a transactional as well as a subjectivist epistemology (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.111). Furthermore, the constructivist paradigm follows a naturalistic set of methodological processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 43). Interpretivism enables researchers to develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest in its natural setting (Pham, 2018). Similarly, Willis (2007) refers to interpretivism as a socially constructed paradigm that offers a deeper understanding of a phenomenon and is thereby different from positivism and critical theories that offer broad conclusions. A further advantage of interpretivism is that it offers diverse views of exploring the phenomena of interest thereby enabling interpretivist researchers to not only describe but also deeply understand objects, humans or events in their social context (Pham, 2018).

An interpretivist paradigm was most suited for this study as it offers methodological processes for data collection and data analysis that enable researchers to gain an understanding of the participants’ lived experiences. This study endeavoured to understand

the psychosocial challenges that FP learners at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole experienced and to identify how the psychosocial support provided to the affected learners could be enhanced. Thus, based on the principles of an interpretivist paradigm, a platform was created for this study to be conducted with the participants in the natural setting of the phenomenon of interest, which in this case was a no-fee school in the Cape Metropole. Furthermore, by applying an interpretivist framework for this study, I was able to embrace and gain a deeper understanding of the selected educators and parents lived experiences of the phenomenon through face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires.

Due to the nature of this study the parent participants all live in the immediate environment that is eroded with psychosocial risk factors such as unemployment, poverty and gang violence. The parent participants were all mothers as most of the fathers are absent within their family structure. Also, the mother participants are all unemployed and they rely on the monthly Child Support Grant (CSG) to see to their basic living costs. The educator participants are well experienced in the FP and are familiar with the contextual challenges experienced by the community.

3.4 Research design

This study employed a basic qualitative research design, which forms part of an interpretivist paradigm. In order to execute this study efficiently, it was important for me, as the researcher to connect and interact with specific participants in their natural setting to gain a comprehensive insight of their lived experiences, hence a basic qualitative research design complemented this study. A basic qualitative study is a common form of qualitative research in the field of education (Merriam & Tisdell 2016). In qualitative research the research design process begins with the researcher's philosophical assumptions as well as the researcher's use of interpretive and theoretical frameworks, which further shape the study (Creswell, 2013, p. 18). Therefore "A research design places the researcher in the empirical world and connects him or her to specific sites, persons, groups, institutions and bodies of relevant interpretive material, including documents and archives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 58). It further indicates how the researcher will address the two central issues of representation and legitimation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 58).

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) present six commonly used qualitative designs: basic qualitative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis and qualitative

case study. These qualitative designs have some similar characteristics, though each study adopts a different focus, this causes variations in how the research question is formulated, the sample selection criteria and how data will be collected and analysed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that qualitative researchers that conduct a basic qualitative study would be interested in "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences."

Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 43) refer to qualitative research as a complex, interconnected unit of terms, concepts and assumptions that make the world visible. In the same way, Creswell (2013, p. 64) views qualitative research metaphorically as an intricate fabric comprised of minute threads, many colors, different textures and various blends of material, alluding that different qualitative researchers with different worldviews are the creative artists that create the fabric of qualitative research. Creswell (2013, p. 44) further states that qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, data collection occurs in a natural setting with sensitivity to the research participants and data analysis that is inductive and develops patterns or themes. Furthermore, Hammersley (2013) suggests some similar features of qualitative research; he refers to it as a social inquiry that follows a flexible and data-driven orientation that uses relatively unstructured data gathered from a small number of naturally occurring cases through verbal forms of analysis. Likewise, Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 43) indicate that qualitative research encompasses an interpretive, naturalistic approach, meaning qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings endeavoring to interpret meaning of a phenomenon as it is understood or experienced by people. Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 22) state that the focus of all qualitative research is "how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences".

Additionally, Creswell (2013, p. 45) summarizes the common characteristics of qualitative research, some of which is discussed for the purpose of this research:

- Natural setting – Qualitative researches do not collect data in a lab; instead data is gathered at the specific site where the participants experience the phenomenon. Thus, data is gathered through face-to-face interaction within the participants' context over time.
- Researcher as key instrument – Data collection, whether it entails examining documents, observing participant behaviour or interviewing participants, it is done by the qualitative researcher. Qualitative researchers may use an instrument for collecting data such as

questionnaires, but they develop it themselves.

- Multiple sources of data – Qualitative researches do not rely on a single data source, instead multiple forms of data collection are employed such as interviews, observations and documents. The researcher reviews the collected data in order to make sense of it after which it is organized into categories or themes.
- Inductive data analysis - Qualitative researchers strive to develop a comprehensive set of themes by using a bottom-up approach when analyzing data.
- Participants' meaning - Throughout a qualitative research process, it is important for the researcher to gain an understanding of the participants' view of the phenomenon and not that of the researcher or writers from previous literature.

3.4.1 Strengths of qualitative research

According to Carr (1994), a major strength of qualitative research is the interactive relationship between the researcher and the participant as it enables the researcher to obtain valuable meaningful data. Ochieng (2009) is of the opinion that qualitative methods are well suited for generating new ways of seeing existing data as well as managing data without destroying complexity and context. Moreover, Anderson (2010) emphasizes the following as strengths of qualitative research: firstly, the phenomenon can be examined in detail; secondly the researcher can redirect interviews in real time, as it is not entirely restricted to specific questions; thirdly the data collected, based on human experience, is powerful and compelling. Additionally, as new information emerges, the researcher can quickly revise the research framework and lastly because data are collected from a few cases, the research findings cannot be transferred to a larger population, however the findings can still be transferred to another setting (Anderson, 2010). By establishing transferability, which refers to providing a detailed meaningful description of the participants' behaviours, experiences, context and the research process, the researcher enables the reader to ascertain if the research findings are transferable to their setting (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.4.2 Limitations of qualitative research

Ochieng (2009) indicates that the central limitation of qualitative approaches is that their findings cannot be extended to broader populations, as it is not tested to show its statistical significance. However, the intention of the current study was never intended to generalize

its findings to the broader population because that is never a goal in interpretivist research. Another possible limitation of qualitative research is that the research quality of a qualitative study is heavily depended on the researcher's skills and can therefore be influenced easily by the researcher's personal biases (Anderson, 2010). Similarly, Pham (2018) reaffirms that qualitative research outcomes are unquestionably impacted by the researchers own worldview, which causes too much bias. In the current study, the researcher took measures to minimise bias through bracketing and keeping a reflective journal. These measures are discussed in the trustworthiness section of this chapter. The researcher also received continuous mentoring by the research supervisor to minimize subjectivity and to be made aware of any possible weaknesses that the supervisor identified in the planning, administration and completion of the research study.

3.4.3 Application of qualitative research in this study

This research enquiry was shaped by a basic qualitative study to gain an in-depth understanding of the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners as well as the support offered to them at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole. Due to the naturalistic nature of qualitative studies, the researcher was able to study the phenomenon in its natural setting, which in this case was at a no-fee school in the Cape Metropole. Conducting the study at the school enabled the researcher to not only meet the participants, but spending time with them created a platform for the researcher to build a relationship with the selected teachers and parents. Building a relationship with the participants also enabled the researcher to minimise the power relationship that often exists between a researcher and the participants and in so doing, was able to empower the participants to share their stories, thus allowing the researcher to listen to their voices (Creswell, 2013 p.48) and in turn meaningful data were obtained. The data were gathered through multiple sources, namely: interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires with the selected educators and parents and with the researcher as key instrument in the data collection process. In addition, the data collection process also included document analysis. The data collected guided the researcher's understanding of the participants' views (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) about the psychosocial challenges experienced by their children. Moreover, the common characteristics of qualitative research, as stated by (Creswell, 2013, p. 45) includes collecting data in the natural setting of the research participants and using multiple methods to collect data with the researcher as key instrument in the data collection process, have all been exercised in this study.

3.5 Population and Sampling

3.5.1 Research setting

The study was conducted at a public primary school situated in a lower socio-economic community in the Cape Metropole after the necessary approval was obtained from the WCED, University of the Western Cape (UWC), school principal, educators and parents. This specific school was selected as the school is listed as a “no-fee” school, in accordance with the Provincial Education Department’s quintile ranking (South African School Act 84, 1996). The school also hosts the prescribed participants that made up the sample selection for this study namely, four FP teachers, a Learner support teacher, SMT representative and a SBST representative as well as six FP parents whose children were receiving psychosocial support at the school.

3.5.2 Sampling

A study population refers to “the study’s target population that it intends to study” (Majid, 2018). In this study, the study population was four FP teachers, a Learner support teacher, SMT representative and a SBST representative as well as six FP parents whose children received psychosocial support at the school. The sample for this study was drawn from the study population. Creswell (2013, p. 156) states that the notion of sampling refers to specific size considerations in the research process, hence the researcher should decide who or what should be sampled and how many people or sites should be sampled in order to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. There are different sampling types. Purposive sampling was used to identify and select participants for this study. Anderson (2010) asserts that purposive sampling is common in qualitative research and indicated that a small sample is recommended for qualitative research due to the detailed and intensive work required for the study. Creswell (2013, p. 156) further states that the term ‘purposive sampling’ is used in qualitative research and it suggests that the researcher purposefully selects certain individuals and sites for a study because they have experience and an understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Table 3.1 illustrates the data collection process.

Table 3.1: Participants and data collection methods used

Participants	Interviews	Focus Group	Questionnaire	Document Analysis
FP Educators		**4**		
SMT Representative	**1**			
SBST Representative	**1**			
LST	**1**			
FP Parents		**6**	**6**	
Documents				**4**

Purposive sampling was chosen for this study because it provided an appropriate vehicle to elicit rich data from participants in line with the aim of a basic qualitative design, the research design of the current study. Therefore, purposive sampling has clearly defined inclusion criteria for the selection of participants. The inclusion criteria to select participants in this study were: four well experienced FP teachers with a minimum of five years teaching experience within the phase, a LST, a SBST representative and a SMT representative. The sample criteria also included six FP parents whose children were receiving psychosocial support at the school. The teacher participants also had to be well acquainted with the surrounding school community. One additional FP educator who is also a trained counselor was recruited for the pilot interview to pre-test the effectiveness of the data collection instrument.

3.6 Data collection

Studies in qualitative research use numerous methods for collecting empirical materials (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p.43). Interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires as well as a document analysis were used as data collection methods for this qualitative study as it deemed ideally suited to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest. These different methods hopefully assisted with the collection of rich data and enabled the

principle of triangulation, which Denzin and Lincoln (2018, p. 561) refer to as the application and combination of multiple approaches in the study of the same phenomenon. Thereby enhancing the credibility of the study. The data collection process commenced after the necessary consent was obtained from all the participants. The data collection was done at a no-fee school, situated in the Cape Metrople and the process was conducted over a five to six weeks period during the first and second school term of 2022.

The researcher also experienced some challenges that arose before the data collection process could commence. After meeting with the principal of a no-fee school within the Cape Metropole, on two occasions and after setting a date to embark on the data collection process, the school withdrew from the partaking in the research study. The researcher had to find another school that met the requirements for this study as a matter of urgency. The researcher selected more schools from the WCED no-fee school list and eventually after sending numerous emails and phone calls, the researcher found another school that was willing to participate in this study.

3.6.1 COVID-19 Protocols

As stipulated in the DBE (2020) standard operating procedure for the management and containment of COVID-19 for schools and school communities entails the following: wear a face mask, all learners, teachers and non-teaching staff entering the school must be screened and must maintain a physical distance of at least 1 meter with others, avoid direct contact with others such as shaking hands or hugging, frequently wash hands with water and soap or use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer to disinfect hands. Furthermore, strict access control measures are established, including the signing of a register by all visitors, visitors must make an appointment and state the nature of their visit and all visitors should be screened. Visitors must wear a face mask and their hands must be sanitized at the entry point. The school where the research was conducted adhered strictly to the COVID-19 protocols. During the data collection process, the researcher as well as the teacher and parent participants maintained a safe distance, sanitized frequently and continued to wear face masks.

3.6.2 Individual interviews

Moser and Kortjens (2018) list the following as features of an interview; there should be interaction between the interviewer (researcher) and the respondents (participants) based on interview questions, which should be written down in an interview guide and the questions

should focus on the phenomenon under study. Additionally, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasise that in all forms of qualitative studies the researcher is "the primary instrument for data collection and analysis." Consequently, Moser and Korstjens (2017) caution that during the interview the researcher should avoid influencing the participants' responses to fit the point of view of the researcher as the focus is on obtaining the participants views about their own experiences, perceptions, thoughts and feelings.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) state that interviews may be categorized as structured, semi-structured, unstructured or in-depth. Saunders et al. (2009) further explain that semi-structured interviews encompass a list of questions compiled by the researcher, which relates to the research topic. Likewise, McGrath, Palmgren and Liljedahl (2019) state that semi-structured interviews include a number of predetermined questions, however the researcher can probe in order to get a better insight into the participants' responses through follow-up questions. For this reason, selecting semi-structured interviews as a data collection method for this study was appropriate, as ultimately the main task thereof was to understand and describe the participants' views and meanings of the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at this particular no-fee school and in so doing identify how the psychosocial support can be enhanced.

The researcher compiled the interview schedule used for this study, which was semi-structured and guided by the theoretical framework and research questions of the study, to obtain meaningful data. The interview schedule comprised five open-ended questions, which were used as entry points for the researcher to probe further to explore the lived experiences of the participants relating to this study.

The individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted at the school premises with the LST, the SBST representative as well as the SMT representative. Each participant indicated a convenient time for the interview that did not intrude on his or her work commitments and the scheduled duration of each interview was forty minutes to an hour. In line with research ethics, the researcher reminded the participants of the confidentiality and anonymity aspect of the study and that they could withdraw from the study if they no longer feel comfortable with the nature of the study. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. Throughout the interviews the researcher rephrased the data collected and requested that the participants reflect on the accuracy of the data collected to ensure

credibility of the study.

The LST is placed at two no-fee schools within the same neighbourhood and due to her work schedule, she is only available at the research setting on one day of the school week. Thus, scheduling a convenient time for her to conduct the interview was challenging. The SMT representative, the SBST representative and the LST displayed a positive attitude and they did not hesitate to share their experiences regarding the psychosocial challenges faced by the FP learners at their school as well as the strengths and the limitations of the psychosocial support offered to the affected FP learners.

3.6.3 Focus group interviews

The participants in a focus group discussion usually share a commonality such as professional background or similar experiences, thus the researcher uses the participants' interactions to gather the information needed on a particular topic (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). Therefore, a focus group is best suited when studying the complexity surrounding lifestyle behaviours within the context of lived experience Rabiee (2004). Furthermore Rabiee (2004) is also of the opinion that focus groups can generate a broad set of data in a short time frame. Moser and Korstjens (2017) also indicate that focus groups generally consist of 6 – 12 participants and smaller focus groups also allow more time for participants to discuss their views in more detailed information. Based on the aforementioned features of focus group discussions, the researcher deemed it appropriate for this study as it created a platform for the participants to discuss their different viewpoints and feelings about the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners and to indicate what more can be done at their particular school to enhance the psychosocial support rendered to the affected learners.

For the purposes of this study, two focus group discussions were held; one was with the four FP teachers and the other with the six FP parents whose children were receiving psychosocial support at school. Both focus group sessions were held at school at the time indicated by the participants; the duration of each session was approximately an hour. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule to stimulate the focus group discussion; thereby gaining a detailed understanding of the participants lived experiences. The development of the items of the interview schedule was informed by the study's theoretical framework. Throughout the focus group discussions, the researcher rephrased the data collected and requested that the participants reflect on the accuracy of the data

collected to ensure credibility of the study.

The first focus group was with the four FP educators. The focus group discussion was audio recorded with the permission of the participants. In line with research ethics, the researcher reminded the participants of the confidentiality and anonymity aspect of the study and that they could withdraw from the study if they no longer feel comfortable with the nature of the study. The educator participants discussed each question as per the interview schedule with rigor.

The second focus group discussion was with the six FP parents and it was conducted in the staff room at school with the permission of the principal. The staff room was not available to the staff members during the time of the focus group discussion. The SMT representative, who is also the FP department head, assisted the researcher to make contact with the parent participants. Due to ill health and other family responsibilities, the six parent participants were not able to attend the session at the same time and therefore the researcher had to schedule two separate focus group discussions with the parent participants based on their availability. At first the FP parent participants appeared shy and nervous, but once the discussions started they appeared more comfortable. The parent participants also requested to have the group discussions in both English and Afrikaans as some of them felt more comfortable expressing themselves in Afrikaans, to which the researcher duly agreed. The focus group discussions were audio recorded with the permission of the participants, to ensure accuracy of the data collected and in line with research ethics, the researcher reminded the participants of the confidentiality and anonymity aspect of the study and that they could withdraw from the study if they no longer feel comfortable with the nature of the study.

3.6.4 Questionnaires

Research questionnaires are a common data collection method that are usually designed to be completed remotely by participants without any direct interaction with the researcher and it is distributed to the research participants either by post, email, online or face-to-face- by hand (Rowley, 2014). Furthermore, McLafferty (as cited in McGuirk & O'Neil, 2016) states that questionnaires can be used as a data collection method to gain an insight about people, their behaviours, experiences, social interactions, attitudes and opinions. McGuirk and O'Neill (2016) also allude that qualitative data collected through questionnaires only, can be limiting, though it can be effective if combined with more intensive qualitative data collection

methods such as interviews and focus groups to provide more in-depth perspectives. Although each questionnaire is unique, the following common features should be adhered to for structuring a well-designed qualitative research questionnaire; “a great deal of thought and preparation, effective organizational strategies, a critical review and the questionnaire must relate to the broader research question” (McGuirk & O’Neill, 2016). Subsequently, using a questionnaire as a data collection method for this study was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to gain insight into the participants’ understanding about psychosocial challenges and psychosocial support. For the purposes of this study the questionnaires were distributed by hand to the FP parents. The questionnaire was self-constructed by the researcher and it consisted of four open-ended questions that required a more detailed answer and three multiple-choice questions with three options to select from. Each question was however aimed at obtaining relevant data relating to the research topic. The completed questionnaires were followed-up with a focus group discussion with the selected six FP parents to obtain more in-depth perspectives about the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners and how the psychosocial support provided to the learners can be enhanced.

3.6.5 Document Analysis

Bowen (2009) defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for assessing documents that entails the examination and interpretation of data in order to elicit meaning. Bowen (2009) further states that documents provide background information as well as historical insight, which can help researchers understand the historical roots of the phenomena currently under investigation. Wood, Sebar and Vecchio (2020) state that qualitative document analysis contributes to the coherence and credibility of the study as it reveals the methodological congruence between the worldview of the researcher, the aims of the research as well as the nature and scope of the documents under investigation. Document analysis is an iterative process that involves skimming, reading and interpretation of data in combination with the elements of thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009). Additionally, Wood et al. (2020) suggest the following guidelines on a qualitative document analysis process based on thematic analysis, which encompasses four interwoven steps: firstly, establishing the corpus of documents relevant to the research purpose, secondly, “open coding” that identifies broad topic areas in the data, thirdly, “theoretical coding” that clusters open codes into themes and concepts and lastly, creating a coherent story that connects emerging themes from the data and the literature in a meaningful way. For this study, document analysis was used in conjunction with interviews, focus group discussions and

questionnaires as a means of triangulation, thereby seeking authentication through the use of different data collection methods. In the current study, the following documents were analysed: The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) national inclusive education policy (DBE, 2014), the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) programme (DBE, 2014), the Integrated School Health Policy [ISHP] (DBE, 2012) as well as the SBST policy of the school under study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed as a qualitative data analytic method for this study. Clarke and Braun (2017) regard thematic analysis as a rigorous thematic approach that ultimately involves analyzing a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning that answer particular research questions. Similarly, Joffe (2011) states that thematic analysis facilitates obtaining knowledge relating to the meaning made of a phenomenon under study by the research participants and provide the groundwork necessary for establishing valid models of human thinking, feeling and behaviour. A key characteristic of qualitative research analysis is that the process is inductive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Clarke and Braun (2017) inductive analysis or “bottom-up” way is a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions. Thematic analysis is also compatible with constructionist paradigms within psychology (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Therefore, it was appropriate for this research project, which endeavored to study the participants’ meanings and experiences of the phenomenon under study, in line with the chosen interpretivist paradigm of this study.

Although thematic analysis is flexible as it allows the researcher to determine themes in various ways, it is however important to apply consistency throughout the process (Clarke & Braun, 2013). For this reason Clarke and Braun (2013) caution that a weak or unconvincing analysis reflects in themes that are not coherent, overlapping and inconsistent. Subsequently, Creswell (2007) is of the opinion that during the analysis process, the researcher should be guided by a path of analyzing the data to develop an in-depth knowledge of the topic being studied. Braun and Clarke (2006) therefore recommend the following six-phase guide to performing thematic analysis illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase process of thematic analysis

- Phase one - Familiarizing yourself with your data:
  I first transcribed the audio recordings of the individual interviews and the focus groups interviews into written text so that it reflects a verbatim version of the verbal data. Thereafter, I immersed myself in the entire data set, including the data collected through questionnaires as well as the document analysis, by repeatedly reading the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the importance of familiarizing oneself with the data as it represents the foundation of the data analysis process. Transcribing the audio recordings and re-reading the data set enabled me to become familiar with the content of the data collected and also to gain an in-depth understanding thereof (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then made notes of initial thoughts that arose from the data set, which initiated the coding process.

- Phase two - Generating initial codes:
  After actively re-reading the transcribed data, the participant responses to the questionnaires and the related documents used for the document analysis, I coded the data manually. Certain words and phrases that seemed interesting and important in relation to the research topic were underlined as preliminary codes. I then identified similarities in the underlined data and collated it into colour-coded groups using highlighters to indicate repeated patterns across the data set, which suggest potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

- Phase three - Searching for themes:
  Braun and Clarke (2006) allude that a meaningful patterned response within a data set that captures an important aspect of the data in relation to the research question is what constitutes a theme. Kiger and Varpio (2020) explain that researchers develop themes by analyzing, combining, comparing and mapping how codes are linked to one another. After colour-coding the data I reviewed and matched the coded data to form potential overarching themes. At this stage I named the preliminary main themes and I did not discard codes that did not directly relate to the research question as yet.

- Phase four - Reviewing themes:
  This phase requires the researcher to hone in on the themes identified in phase 3 by reading the complete data set again and refining those themes to ensure that the individual themes have sufficient supporting data that displays a meaningful coherent representation of the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). After reviewing the initial themes I made some adjustments in order for the themes to meaningfully represent the complete data set. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the researcher concludes this phase by knowing what the different themes are, understanding how they are linked as well as being able to comprehend the complete narrative about the data.

- Phase five - Defining and naming themes:
  At this stage, Braun and Clarke (2006) requires the researcher to ascertain what each theme represents and how it tells a meaningful story about the entire data set in relation to the research questions. In order to meet this requirement I compiled a detailed analysis of each theme that portraits a logical and comprehensible account of what each theme represents and how each theme is interwoven into the overall story of my data set. Furthermore, I generated concise names for each theme that suggest what the theme entails (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

- Phase six - Producing a report:
  Producing a report entails structuring the story that the data tells in a concise, coherent, interesting and logical manner within and across themes that persuades the reader of the validity of your analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The report about my findings also include data extracts that show the relevance of each theme in relation to the meaningful story that the data represents and it will be discussed in more detail in chapter four.

3.8 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research the same quality criteria apply to all qualitative designs. However the quality criteria used in quantitative research, such as internal validity, generalizability, reliability and objectivity are not suitable to judge the quality of qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Saunders et al. (2009) state that reliability refers to the extent to which the data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings, whilst validity refers to whether or not the findings are really about what they appear to be

about. Qualitative researchers however speak of trustworthiness, which refers to the question “Can the findings be trusted?” (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Likewise Guba and Lincoln (2005) emphasise that the value of a researched study is measured by its trustworthiness. According to Guba and Lincoln (2005), establishing trustworthiness involves the following criteria which was adhered to in this study:

Credibility - Confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. Similarly, Korstjens and Moser (2018) define the notion of credibility as establishing whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from participants’ original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants’ original views. This study employed method triangulation as a strategy to ensure the credibility of the study. According to Korstjens and Moser (2018), based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985), method triangulation means multiple methods of data collection, thus for this study data was gathered through interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and document analysis. In addition, to ensure credibility, the process of member checking (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) was also applied throughout the interviews and focus group discussions whereby the researcher requested that the participants reflect on the accuracy of the data collected (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). The interviews and focus group discussions were also audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in what participants had shared.

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), based on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Even though the findings of qualitative studies cannot necessarily be transferred to broader populations, it should be noted that this study applied the notion of transferability, which forms part of the quality criteria in qualitative research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) and it guided the researcher to provide rich descriptive data relating to the research setting, sample size and selection, demographic and socio-economic aspects of the phenomenon as well as the data collection process. In so doing the researcher created a platform for the reader to assess whether the findings of this study are transferable to other settings.

Dependability refers to the stability of the research findings over time, encompassing the research participants’ evaluation, interpretation and recommendations of the study; showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated (Korstjens & Moser 2018). To establish dependability, this study employed an audit trail, which entailed transparently

describing the research steps taken from the start of the study to the development and reporting of the findings as suggested by Korstjens and Moser (2018).

Confirmability as described by Korstjens and Moser (2018), is concerned with establishing that the findings of a study are shaped by the data as derived from the research participants and not researcher biased. To establish confirmability, this study employed an audit trail, which entailed transparently describing the research steps taken from the start of the study to the development and reporting of the findings as suggested by Korstjens and Moser (2018).

Additionally **bracketing,** which Gearing (as cited in Tufford & Newman, 2010), describes as a scientific process in which a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her beliefs, biases or previous experiences to see and describe the phenomenon based on the participants' accounts with an open mind, thus further ensuring that the findings of the study are shaped by the data as derived from the participants. As suggested by Tufford and Newman (2010), to establish bracketing for this study, the researcher used a reflective journal throughout the research process in which the researcher's preconceptions are identified; enhancing the researcher's ability to sustain a reflective stance and in so doing maintaining effective and meaningful qualitative research based on the participants' accounts of the phenomenon. For this study, journaling throughout the research process aided the researcher to voice the participants' lived experiences and understandings of the phenomenon and not that of the researcher.

Pilot Testing and assessing validity, Williams-McBean (2019) refers to pilot studies as small-scale studies that is followed by larger studies and guides the researcher to adjust the larger study accordingly. Similarly, Kim (2011) alludes that the pilot study relates to identifying specific methodological and epistemological issues that enables researchers to affirm, sharpen and revise how to pursue and achieve goals in their propose studies. Whilst Saunders et al. (2009), suggest that it is important to pilot test your questionnaire prior to using it to collect data, as it will enable the researcher to refine the questionnaire so that the participants will have no problems in answering the questions and there will be no problems in recording the data. Saunders et al. (2009) further state that pilot testing will also enable the researcher to obtain some idea of the questions' validity as well as the reliability of the data that will be collected. Creswell (2013, p. 165) indicates that pilot testing can also help the researcher to refine the interview questions and help to overcome possible challenges

in the main study. For the purposes of this study an FP educator who is also a trained counselor, was recruited for the pilot interview to pre-test the effectiveness of the data collection instrument and provide feedback on my interviewing skills for improvement.

3.9 Ethical considerations

According to Vanclay, Baines and Taylor (2013), the application of ethics in a professional context often takes the form of a written code, document or agreement that guides individuals within an organization or profession about morally acceptable behavior. Consequently Vanclay et al. (2013) highlight that good professional practice entails complying with ethical principles. Likewise, Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden (2001) state that through the application of appropriate ethical principles, dilemmas in the research process can be prevented or reduced. Both Vanclay et al. (2013) and Orb et al. (2001) respectively emphasize that the participants' privacy and confidentiality as well as respect for participants and Informed consent is imperative.

This study obtained ethical clearance from the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape (Ethics Ref No: HS20/4/35) (Appendix 1). Approval was also granted by the WCED to conduct research at a public no-fee school in the Cape Metropole (Appendix 2). Prior to agreeing to participate in the research study, the researcher discussed the objectives of the study with all the participants and in addition informed the participants that participation is voluntary hence they could withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher also discussed the application of confidentiality and anonymity for this study (Appendices 3a and 4a). The teacher participants and the parent participants willingly signed the consent forms (Appendices 3b and 4b) after which the data collection process commenced.

Respect for participants

The researcher exercised respect to all participants by not judging, discriminating or discrediting them and by ensuring that their views were(s) accurately recorded and duly considered (Vanclay et al., 2013).

Informed consent

According to Orb et al. (2001) and Arifin (2018) informed consent means to adequately inform the participants about the research study, allowing them time to comprehend the information and respecting their freedom of choice to voluntarily accept or refuse to

participate in the study. Similarly, Vanclay et al. (2013) state that participation should be the voluntary choice of the participants based on sufficient information and an adequate understanding of the research and the consequences of their participation. For the purpose of this study, all participants willingly signed a consent form prior to the commencement of the study, stating the aims and objectives of the study, as well as the intended research output, which is in the form of a research report as well as the possible publication of an article(s) in an academic journal.

Recording

Vanclay et al. (2013) states that a researcher should obtain specific permission in advance from participants if the researcher intends to audio record, video record or photograph any participant as it may be a legal requirement under the privacy legislation of most countries. Written permission was obtained from the participants to audio record the interviews. Participants were informed that the audio recordings will be stored securely in a password-protected database.

Right to withdraw

Consistent with the principle of voluntary participation is the participant's right to withdraw; this means that the participants must be aware that they can withdraw from the study at any time (Vanclay et al., 2013). For this study the participants were informed that participation is voluntary, therefore they were under no obligation to participate and could therefore withdraw from the study at any time and that there were no penalties for withdrawing prematurely from the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Vanclay et al. (2013) state that the notion of privacy and confidentiality suggest that when information is entrusted to a researcher in confidence, the researcher undertakes the responsibility to protect such confidentiality through preservation of anonymity. From the outset participants were assured of anonymity by concealing their identities. Further, their transcripts were not accessed by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor. The records of this study are kept strictly confidential.

Storage and Security

According to Vanclay et al. (2013) it is imperative to protect data by storing it securely and

keeping it safe from unauthorized access. For the purpose of this study, research records are kept in a locked file and all electronic information was coded and secured using a password-protected file. Data will be destroyed five years after the study's completion. Hardcopies of data were shredded and electronic copies were permanently deleted. Finally, due to the possibly sensitive nature of the research topic, the participants were treated with sensitivity and respect.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology of this study, which included the research paradigm and the research design as well as an overview of the selection of the participants, followed by the data collection instruments used for this study. It also honed in on the thematic data analysis process and provided a detailed account thereof. Lastly, this chapter discussed the application of trustworthiness and the ethical considerations employed this study. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings emanating from the thematic data analysis, as derived from the different data collection methods. The findings will be presented in an integrated manner in an attempt to answer the study's main and subsidiary research questions. The data was collected from the SMT representative, the SBST representative, the LST, four FP educators and six FP parents from the school under study. In addition, the following documents were analysed as part of this study's data collection: The policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DBE, 2014), Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) (DBE, 2014), Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP; DBE, 2012) and the SBST policy of the school under study. For the purpose of this research the document analysis focuses only on the information that relates to the research questions. The findings of the document analysis will be discussed at the end of each of the three research questions. The data will be presented according to the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the thematic data analysis and will be discussed under the study's research questions. Finally, this study is guided by Bronfenbrenner's ecological model that depicts how different interrelated systems shape human development as well as Erikson's psychosocial development theory, which proposes that human development passes through eight psychosocial stages.

4.2 Context of the study

This research study explored the psychosocial challenges that FP learners at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole experience and in addition identifies how the psychosocial support provided to the affected learners can be enhanced.

This study centers around the following main and subsidiary research questions:

Main research question:

What is the nature of support provided to FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges at a no-fee school in the Cape Metropole?

Subsidiary questions:

- What types of psychosocial challenges do FP learners experience at the no-fee school?
- What support is provided to address the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at the no-fee school?
- How can the psychosocial support given to FP learners at the no-fee school be enhanced?

4.3 Presentation and discussion of the study's findings

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the presentation and discussion of the study's findings will be presented in an integrated manner in an attempt to answer the study's main and subsidiary research questions. The discussion will include the citation of relevant literature as well as verbatim extracts from the focus group and the individual interviews in order to strengthen the validity of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as the extracts depict the authentic voices of the participants. In addition, the extracts of the FP educator participants that participated in the focus group interviews will be referred to as E1 to E4, whilst the FP parent participants will be indicated as PP1 to PP6. In some instances where the participant responded in Afrikaans, the translation will be placed in square brackets […] and an ellipsis will replace words omitted.

4.3.1 Description of the participants

The educator participants are all members from the school under study and included the SMT representative, the SBST representative, the LST as well as four FP educator participants. The SMT representative is the department head of the FP and the SBST representative is also a member of the school's SMT, serving in an acting capacity as the department head of the Intersen Phase (Grades 4 – 6). The LST serves two schools within the same education district and is only available to the school under study once a week. All the educator participants are well experienced within the field of education and are well acquainted with the school community. The six FP parent participants, whose children were receiving psychosocial support from the school under study, were all females and four of the six participants are single parents. All six FP parent participants were unemployed at the time of the study and their level of formal education seemed limited as they lacked the necessary skills to formulate a structured sentence when completing the questionnaire.

4.3.2 Documents that were analysed

For the purposes of this study, the documents selected for the document analysis relate to the research topic. The researcher specifically honed in on the data stipulated in these documents that relate to the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners in order to collect rich data that would enable the researcher to gain a better understanding of the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners as well as the support offered by the relevant role-players in order to mitigate these challenges. The document analysis of the SIAS policy, the CSTL document, the ISHP and the SBST policy of the school under study, found that these policies are interwoven as they share key similarities in terms of the roles of the relevant role-players, the processes to be followed when identifying learners at risk and when offering the necessary support to the affected learners at school and district level. In order to regulate the relevant identification and support processes relating to social and health challenges, including psychosocial challenges that constitute barriers to learning, these policies are underpinned by legislative framework, which include: The Constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996), The Children's Act (Act No. 38 of 2005), The South African Schools Act (Act No. 84 of 1996), The Social Assistance Act (Act No. 13 of 2004), The National Health Act (Act No. 63 of 2003) and The Mental Health Care Act (Act No. 17 of 2002). Although the four policies that were analysed, differ to a certain degree in terms of the purpose that they serve, the core foci of these four policies is to ensure the alleviation of barriers or challenges such as psychosocial challenges that may hinder the optimal development of all learners. Table 4.1 below outlines the aim and purpose of each policy that formed part of the document analysis for this study. Further findings of the document analysis will be presented and discussed at the end of each research question.

With reference to the SBST policy of the school under study, it should be noted that even though the term, *academic barriers,* is not stipulated in the policy; it forms part of the umbrella term, learning and development barriers. The FP educators and the LST at the school under study, facilitate academic support to the FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges.

Table 4.1: Documents that were analysed

Documents that were analysed	
The policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DBE, 2014)	**Aim:** To respond to the needs of all learners in South Africa, especially learners who experience barriers to learning and are most likely to be marginalized and excluded. **Purpose:** The policy stipulates the roles of the different support mechanisms and the responsibilities of the education support system in South Africa, which includes the District-based Support Teams, Special School Resource Centres, Full-Service Schools and the School-based Support Teams in order to provide a policy framework for the standardisation of the procedures to identify, assess and support provision for all learners who experience barriers to learning (DBE, 2014).
Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) (DBE, 2014)	**Aim:** To transform schools into inclusive centres of learning, care and support in order to ensure that all children, especially the most vulnerable, access quality education and perform optimally. **Purpose:** It provides a comprehensive description of the ten Priority Action Areas identified by the DBE to guide schools in implementing the CSTL programme. The Priority Action Areas are: Rights-based, socially inclusive and cohesive school, Nutrition, Health promotion, Infrastructure, water and sanitation, Social welfare services, Safety and protection, Psychosocial support, Curriculum support, Co-curricular support, Material support (DBE, 2014).
Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP) (DBE, 2012)	**Aim:** To ensure that a strong school health service operates according to clear standards across the country. **Purpose:** To address the immediate health problems of learners, including those that constitute barriers to learning, as well as implementing interventions that can promote health and well-being during childhood and adulthood. In so doing, the policy outlines the role of the respective departments in order to attend to the health needs of learners (DBE, 2012).
SBST policy of the school under study	**Aim:** To support all learners who experience social, emotional and unique barriers in order to develop all its learners holistically. **Purpose:** To assist learners, educators and parents with the prevention of learning and development barriers by understanding and implementing alternative methods of assessment where necessary as well as supporting inclusive education and promoting awareness of special needs whilst maintaining confidentiality principles. **Function:** Identify learners with barriers to learning. Draft Individual Support Plans (ISPs) for learners in need of support. Assist class educators with class intervention and monitor and evaluate learners' progress. If further intervention is needed the referral with the necessary documentation, Support Needs Assessment Form (SNA), will be made to the District Based Support Team (DBST), a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) or the local clinic. Referrals to special schools, schools of skills, psychologists, social workers and medical doctors are referred to the (DBST).

4.3.3 Themes emanating from the data analysis

This study employed thematic analysis to analyse the collected data, which was manually transcribed by the researcher. The transcribed data reflects a verbatim version of the verbal data. The transcription process was followed by coding and grouping consistent patterns within the data set and subsequently themes that relate to the research topic emerged (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Figure 4.1 presents an overview of the themes and sub-themes that emanated from the data analysis.

Figure 4.1: Themes and sub-themes

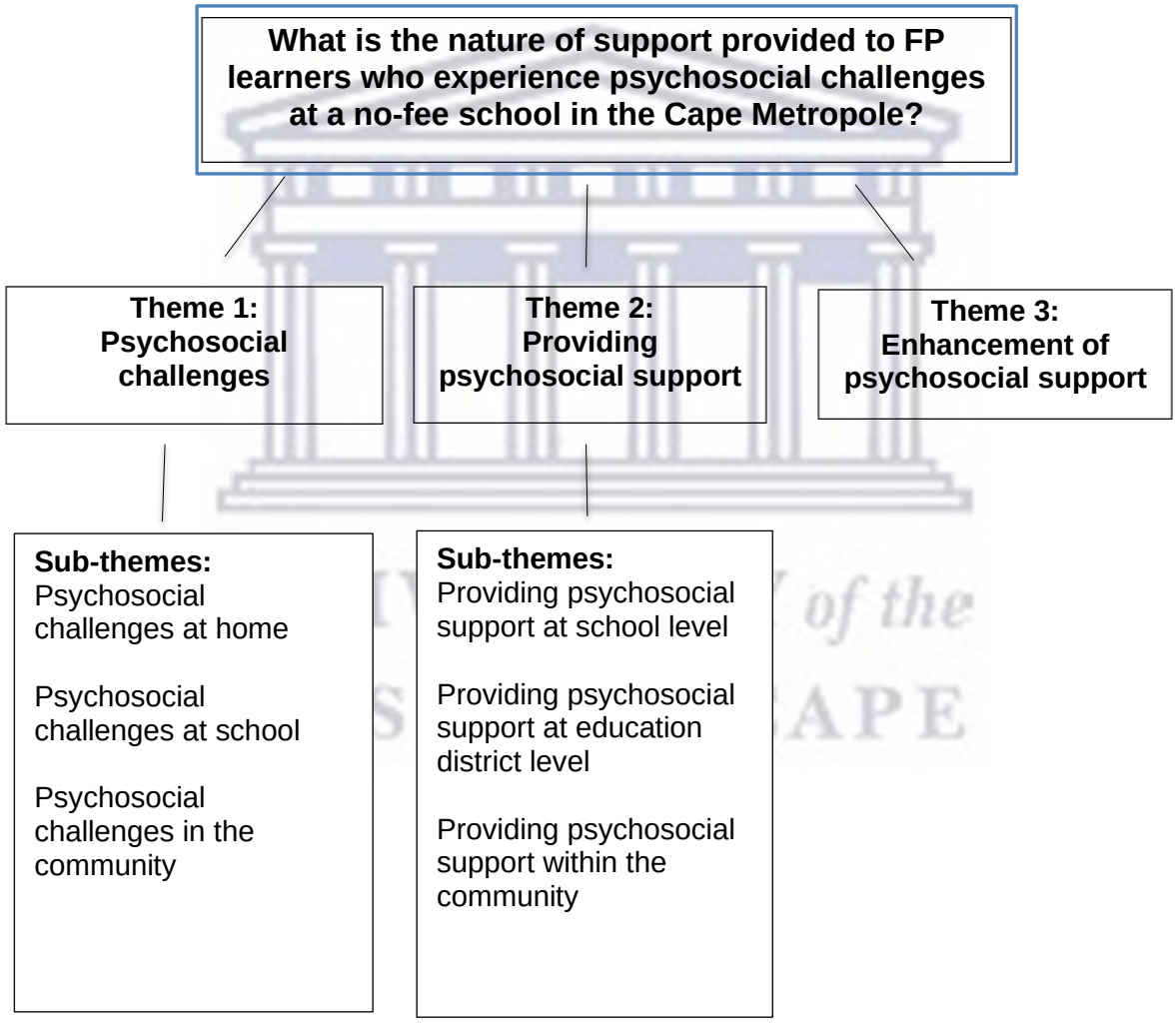


Figure 4.1 illustrates three main themes. Theme 1 and 2 comprise various sub-themes, which will be discussed in detail in relation to the findings that derived from the different data collection methods and in conjunction with relevant literature, in an attempt to answer the study's main and subsidiary research questions.

4.3.4 Research question 1: What types of psychosocial challenges do FP learners experience at the no-fee school?

The theme answering this research question is: Psychosocial challenges. This theme comprises three sub-themes, namely, (i) Psychosocial challenges at home, (ii) Psychosocial challenges at school and (iii) Psychosocial challenges in the community.

Although the educator participants, which included the SMT representative, the SBST representative, the LST as well as the four FP educators, participated in different data collection methods employed by this study, it was evident based on their responses, that they identified similar psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners at the school under study. The FP parent participants unanimously reported similar psychosocial challenges experienced by their children. In addition, five of the six parent participants emphasized that the psychosocial challenges experienced by their children mainly derive from the community. In contrast, the educator participants were of the opinion that the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners at the school under study derived from both the learners' home environments as well as the community. Adelman and Taylor (2021) reflect the views of both the parent and educator participants of the current study by contending that children's behaviour and emotional problems stem from the neighbourhood, family, school or peers. Table 4.2 illustrates the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners as reported by the educator and the FP parent participants of the school under study.

The shaded areas in Table 4.2 indicate the similarities and differences in terms of the psychosocial challenges reported by both educator and FP parent participants. With reference to Table 4.2 both educator and FP parent participants agreed that poverty, unemployment, overcrowded homes, family structure/types, (The latter referring to single parent households-absent fathers, divorced parents, children raised by grandparents and parents experiencing marital problems), bullying at school, exposure to violence in the community and exposure to gang related violence are psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners at the school under study. In addition, the educator participants alluded that exposure to violence at home, exposure to alcohol abuse, exposure to drug abuse, exposure to emotional abuse, exposure to physical abuse, exposure to sexual activities, lack of parental involvement and parenting skills also form part of the psychosocial challenges experienced by their FP learners.

Table 4.2: Psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners as reported by the research participants

Psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners	Parent participants	Educator participants
Poverty		
Unemployment		
Overcrowded homes		
Family structure/types		
Exposure to violence at home		
Exposure to drug abuse		
Exposure to alcohol abuse		
Exposure to emotional abuse		
Exposure to physical abuse		
Exposure to sexual activities		
Lack of parental involvement and parenting skills		
Bullying at school		
Exposure to violence in the community		
Exposure to gang related violence		

The psychosocial challenges listed in Table 4.2 will be presented and discussed in detail under the following sub-themes.

4.3.4.1 Psychosocial challenges that derive from home

The current study identified the following psychosocial challenges that derive from home: poverty, unemployment, overcrowded homes, family structure/types, exposure to violence, abuse and sexual activities, and lack of parental involvement and parenting skills. Each psychosocial challenge will be discussed next.

a) Poverty

This study's findings yielded poverty as a dominant psychosocial challenge experienced by the learners at the school under study. All the participant groupings reported poverty as a major psychosocial challenge experienced by the learners at the school under study. The FP parent participants alluded that they often have to make a loan to buy food or electricity or whatever the need is at the time. In return they have to repay the amount that they owe plus a big chunk of interest, leaving them with only a small part of the children's monthly social grant to survive the following month. This means of survival sustains the poverty cycle in their lives. The level of financial difficulties that they experience on a daily basis is evident in their responses:

PP2: *" 'n mens leun maar geld deur die maand, maar die mense vra rente op die geld."* [I have to borrow money throughout the month, but the people charge interest on the money.]

PP1: *"As ek nou R200 leun, moet ek R150 op die R200 betaal, so basies sien jy nie eens jou pay* [SASSA grant] *nie."* [If I borrow a R200, then I have to repay the R200 plus a R150 interest, from the childrens' SASSA grant. So basically, you do not even see your money (SASSA grant).]

PP5: *"Soms is daar nie kos in die huis nie dan moet ons geld leun vir ń stukkie brood."* [Sometimes we do not have food in the house and therefore we have to borrow money for bread.]

PP1: "*Wanneer die skool civvies het, dan hou ek my kinders by die huis want ek het nie geld nie … dit maak hulle frustrated en withdrawn*" [I keep my children at home when it's civvies as I don't have money … this frustrates them and they become withdrawn.]

With reference to Civvies days at the school under study, it is part of the school's fundraiser initiatives that allow the learners to dress in clothing other than their school uniform at a set cost and often the cost includes a snack, bringing the total cost to approximately R20 per learner. Learners who are not able to pay the R20 should come to school dressed in their school uniform. As reported by this particular FP parent participant, she is unable to afford the cost related to civvies days and consequently keeps her children at home (probably to avoid them feeling embarrassed at school), which frustrates them as they want to partake in the school's civvies day activities like their peers.

The impact of poverty on the daily life experiences and development of young children cannot be underestimated. Poverty hinders the physical, psychological and social development of children (Lund et al., 2021; Statistics South Africa, 2020), as it encompasses a complex web of adversity (Setlhare et al., 2016) that brings about the psychosocial challenges many of the FP learners at the school under study battle with on a daily basis. Relevant literature indicates that poverty has concomitant psychosocial challenges, that lead to adverse childhood experiences and these challenges are closely aligned with those reported by the research participants of this study, namely: unemployment**,** exposure to violence at home and in the community, exposure to drug abuse, alcohol abuse, marital problems, divorced parents, single parent households, absent fathers, children raised by grandparents, overcrowded homes, exposure to gang related violence, bullying at school and at home, emotional abuse, lack of parental involvement, physical abuse and sexual abuse (Nel & Grosser, 2016; Naicker et al., 2022).

Poverty impacts the learning process of children negatively and even more so if the parents are unemployed or illiterate and as a result, they find it more challenging to support the learning of their children (Nel & Grosser, 2016). Therefore low-socio-economic conditions have detrimental outcomes on the physical and socio-emotional wellbeing of children (Nel & Grosser, 2016; Setlhare et al., 2016). Consequently, poverty may be associated with unstimulating home environments that impact negatively on child development (Adelman and Taylor (2021).

b) Unemployment

Poverty and unemployment can be regarded as inter-related (De Lannoy et al., 2018). All six FP parent participants reported that they are unemployed and they mainly depend on the child support grant as an income. Similarly, the SMT representative reported that some households depend solely on the South African Social Services Agency (SASSA) grant as a source of financial income. Furthermore, the FP parent participants also shared that most of their children are withdrawn or anxious and do not express their feelings easily although their children often display concern about their (mothers') wellbeing especially when there is no food at home. This is indicative of the challenges that these FP learners face which detracts from their ability to focus in class during the lessons. Drawing from the focus group discussions with the FP parent participants it emerged that they are in desperate need of employment. However as is often the case in the lives of poor people, parent participants in

the current study, had to deal with different and at times, opposing challenges. Therefore, their desperate need to find employment was juxtaposed with their concerns about their children's safety, given the gang related violence in the area and therefore they would prefer to work only during school hours, thus still being able to fetch their children after school and being able to provide for their children's basic needs. The declaration by the parent participants coincide with research conducted by Beasley et al. (2022), which states that parenting in poverty encompasses intertwined challenges such as child safety, providing food daily, inadequate housing and dangerous neighbourhoods. The FP parent participants stated the following in relation to being unemployed:

PP1: *"So ek werk nie en ek het nie solid geld nie."* [I am unemployed and therefore I don't have a fixed income.]

PP3: *"Ek vra soms 'n jobbie vir my en my man… dit sal so lekker wees om vir ons kinders te kan provide."* [I always ask for work for my husband and I … it would be nice to be able to provide for our children.]

With an escalating unemployment rate, poverty and unemployment remains a major challenge in South Africa (Iwu & Opute, 2019). Mothamaha (2021) alludes that the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners stems from their parents being unemployed, which in turn leads to poverty. The desperation caused by poverty results in anxiety among children as they become deeply concerned about their basic needs such as food as well as the wellbeing of their parents. Childrens' mental health is profoundly impacted by the circumstances in which they live (Lund et al., 2021). Certain conditions of poverty such as food insecurity and household unemployment are risk factors for poorer mental health among children as it shapes the neural pathways for developing anxiety (Lund et al., 2021). The following comment refers to what one parent participant shared with regard to her child expressing concern. It is indicative of the anxiety experienced by some of the FP learners at the school under study as a result of poverty.

PP4: *[Mommy I was worried about you today, because here* [at home] *is not bread.] [Don't worry mommy… I'll work for you and give you money to buy food.]*

c) Overcrowded homes

The SMT representative also reported that due to the low economic status of the FP parents at the school under study, their homes are overcrowded resulting in a lack of privacy for parents, adults and children. The educator participants were of the opinion that overcrowded homes can impact negatively on the holistic development of the FP learners as the learners are exposed to every interaction that happens in the household, from adults consuming alcohol irresponsibly to domestic violence. One of the FP parent participants, who indicated that she and her husband are experiencing marital problems, also alluded that they are staying with her family in-law, which can be challenging as their relationship is not private, suggesting that her children are aware of the conflict in their household to the extent that they are concerned about her wellbeing, thus impacting their emotional wellbeing. The participants stated the following with regards to overcrowded households:

SMT representative: " *Daar is so ń klomp mense in een kamer of een huis … daar is geen privaatheid nie so die kinders neem alles waar."* [There are many people sharing one room or one house…so there is no privacy and the children are exposed to everything.]

PP4: "*We are living with my in-laws so it's challenging … our relationship isn't private … sometimes something will be said and my kids will tell me don't worry mommy, we will look after you."*

E1: *"As gevolg van poverty deel baie van ons kinders kamers met ouers en dit het ń negatiewe effect op hulle groei en hulle ouderdom vlak ten opsigte van wat hulle sien."* [Due to poverty many of our learners have to share a room with their parents and what they are exposed to at their age affects their development negatively.]

Nel & Grosser (2016) state that many South African children live in poverty, which consequently result in poor living conditions and overcrowded housing. Likewise, Daniels (2016) asserts that overcrowded homes impact negatively on the optimal growth of children. Furthermore, a study conducted by the World Health Organisation (2022) reiterates that overcrowded and inadequate housing are risk factors that should be mitigated as it poses risks to the mental health of both parents and children.

d) Family structure/types

Four of the six FP parents indicated that they are single parents and they have to take on a multifaceted role of mom and dad with little support from other family members. One of the six FP parent participants reported that her child's psychosocial challenges stem from home as she and her husband are experiencing marital problems. The FP educator participants, the SMT representative as well as the SBST representative also reported that certain family structures such as single parent households, divorced parents and children being raised by grandparents, contributed to associated challenges such as a lack of parental involvement, which impedes child development. The SMT representative expressed concern that in some instances, these young learners were not given the opportunity to be children, as they had to take over the role of the parent by either looking after a younger sibling or cleaning the house because their parents are not always present and in other cases the mother is overburdened with solely taking on family responsibilities. Drawing from the focus group discussion with the FP parent participants, it emerged that these mothers are concerned about their children's physical and emotional wellbeing. They also shared that they feel disappointed if they are unable to provide for their children's material needs such as clothing or stationary as well as having to offer emotional support when it seems that their socioeconomic circumstances are impacting negatively on their children's wellbeing. The FP parent participants reported that the absent fathers do not support their children financially and as the mothers they have to spend their days looking for food for their children when they return from school or borrow money to see to their children's basic needs.

The views of the participants were expressed as stated below:

PP2: *"Hy [dad] ondersteun nie vir ons finansieel nie … ek is my kinders se ma en pa … alles kom van my kante af … hy's net daar vir die show."* [My children's father does not support us financially … I am my childrens' mom and dad … he is only there for show.]

PP2: *"Een keer 'n jaar sal hy [dad] ń 30 randjie gee, wat is daai, want ń brood, melk en krag is R100."* [He will give a R30 once a year and a bread, milk and electricity is at least R100.]

PP1: *"Hulle sal nie hulle pa vra vir 'n R2 of 'n ding nie of met hom praat van hulle probleme nie."* [They will not ask their dad for a R2 or anything or talk about their problems with him.]

PP4: *"My husband and I have separated numerously so there's that lack of communication and I'll be the only one that is there to provide … it affects her [daughter] in a way… I don't always have time to go through things with her."*

SBST representative: *"You can't really say that the mother takes care of her child as the child is being raised by the grandmother."*

Research has highlighted the experience of poverty and associated risks faced by single-parent households. For example, Naicker et al. (2022) state that amongst families at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum in South Africa, 46% of children live in single parent households. Furthermore, Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado (2018) state women head most of the single parent households and that disadvantaged socioeconomic wellbeing has been linked to single parenthood as poverty risks are higher among single-parent households. Moreover, single parents experience poor mental health as care, income, time and flexibility are limited with the absence of another parent. In addition, the emotional wellbeing as well as the cognitive development of children of single parents is impacted negatively (Nieuwenhuis & Maldonado, 2018). The experiences as reported by the participants of this study correlate with the research conducted by Makusha and Richter (2014) that state that the absent father phenomenon is a reality in South Africa and that absent fathers put further pressure on single mother figures. Similarly, Mavungu (2013) concurs that the absent father phenomenon has been labeled as a major social challenge in South Africa, though it should be noted that factors such as poverty and unemployment impact the ability of fathers to live up to provider expectations. Van den Berg and Makusha (2018) emphasise that the lack of sufficient father involvement in childcare in South Africa creates various challenges such as overburdened mothers who battle stressors such as poverty and adversity, which puts an enormous strain on their wellbeing and ultimately impacts negatively on the child's development (Naicker et al., 2022).

Relevant literature alludes that poverty and adversity consequently cause chronic or acute stressors within the family dynamic such as parental relationship problems and disrupted parenting, thus impacting negatively on the wellbeing of both children and parents (Naicker et al., 2022; WHO, 2022). Furthermore, grandparents assuming the role of primary caregivers to their grandchildren have been perceived as an ongoing phenomenon worldwide and South Africa is no exception, with many grandmothers experiencing physical, financial, emotional and social hardship, which consequently impact on the development of

the grandchildren (Dolbin-Macnab, 2015). Previous studies indicate that various factors such as poverty, divorce, domestic violence and substance abuse contribute to the increase in the number of grandparents becoming primary caregivers to their grandchildren (Booys et al., 2015; Dolbin-Macnab, 2015).

e) Exposure to violence, abuse and sexual activities

The educator participants in the current study also stated that the learners at the school are experiencing or being exposed to various types of abuse and violence such as physical abuse, exposure to violence, emotional abuse, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and sexual abuse. The SMT representative reported that many of the learners at this particular school witnessed physical abuse and other forms of aggressive behaviour at home or they are victims of physical abuse, therefore they often behave in an aggressive and disruptive manner at school. Similarly, the SBST representative reported that there are various psychosocial issues that their learners deal with such as violence as well as bullying at home. The FP educator participants asserted that exposure to violence at home and physical abuse forms part of the psychosocial challenges that their FP learners experience. In addition, both the SBST as well as the SMT representative reported that many of the FP learners are victims of emotional abuse at home as they are always being shouted at. The latter participant added that leaners do not receive any positive attention at home. The SBST representative highlighted the degree of abuse that some of these learners are exposed to at home by referring to a case that involved a pair of siblings that attended the school under study. On investigation of the high absenteeism from school, by both learners, it emerged that their stepfather physically and emotionally abused the learners, locked them in at home, starved them and prevented them from attending school at times.

Furthermore, the FP educator participants also reported that some FP learners are exposed to sexual activities at home. One of the FP educator participants elaborated that during playtime the FP learners play with dolls and some FP learners would engage in inappropriate play related to sexual acts. The SMT representative also reported that exposure to drug abuse at home impacts negatively on the development of the FP learners. She shared an incident where a few FP learners took their raffle money that they collected for the school's surf walk to buy marijuana also referred to as "dagga" and proudly told her that they smoked it themselves. Moreover, the SBST representative also referred to an incident where the mother of two learners battles with drug abuse to the extent that she stole

her children's school books and sold it to buy drugs. This happened on more than one occasion until the learners' decided that it's best to leave their books at school.

Both the SBST and the SMT representatives stated that the children are exposed to everything that happens around them, including alcohol abuse, which often leads to arguments in their households. The FP parent participants however, did not allude to any types of abuse or exposure to violence being experienced by their children at home. Instead, they reported on the exposure to violence in the community, which will be discussed under the psychosocial challenges that derive from the community. The following extracts are indicative of the various types of abuse and violence the FP learners at the school under study are exposed to or experience:

SMT Representative: *"Jy kan sien die anger issues wat hulle in hulle het vir 'n klein kind om so aggressief te wees, dit bly net n gesteekery met hulle potlode wat hulle openbaar, want dit is wat hulle sien elke dag"* [You can see that they battle with anger issues, for young children to be so aggressive and it's always a situation where they stab each other with pencils, because they see it every day].

SMT Representative*:" … hy ruk skoons mes op sy tjommies … die kind is in graad 3"* [… threatened his friends with a knife … the child is in grade 3]

LST: *"The little ones* [FP learners] *are extremely aggressive … they are extremely defensive because it is all negative energy that they receive."*

SBST Representative*: "She's [the mom] been abusing drugs ever since she was pregnant with him … there is no father figure there…there's no structure and support [at home]… the mom is on drugs, the children are staying with the grandmother."*

SMT Representative: *"Die ouers is net nie daar nie, as hulle is dan is hulle dronk of so."* [The parents are not supporting their children, as the parents are drunk].

E1: *"Gedurende speeltyd speel hulle [FP learners] met poppe en onmiddelik kan jy sien wat hulle spel uit toon [educator referring to sexual activities]."* [During playtime the learners play with dolls and immediately you can see what they are portraying through their play.]

Relevant literature supports the views of the educator participants in this study that the physical and social environment of a child is vital for a child's growth. Furthermore, disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are associated with various interrelated risk factors such as experiencing or exposure to violence and trauma as well as substance abuse, which can hamper the development of children (Adelman & Taylor, 2021; De Lannoy et al., 2018; Haq, 2013; Jensen et al., 2017; Moore et al., 2014; Savahl et al., 2015). Likewise, Newman and Newman (2017) state that children from low-income families are exposed to domestic violence, substance abuse and in some cases residential instability, which disrupt the holistic development of children. Furthermore, poverty is linked to social exclusion, substance abuse, violence and trauma, which impact negatively on child development (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Also, many children living in low socio-economic communities are deprived from reaching their developmental potential as their developmental opportunities are negatively impacted by context specific challenges such as poverty, inequality, exposure to various forms of violence, abuse and neglect (Atmore et al., 2012; Donald et al., 2016; Manuel et al., 2020; Savahl et al., 2020). Additionally, research conducted by Nel and Grosser (2016) alludes that the prevalence rate of physical, emotional and sexual abuse in areas of poverty is normally high and can consequently result in absenteeism from school.

Rochat and Redinger (2021) emphasize that children in South Africa who are exposed to continuous and excessive violence, are perpetrating the same levels of violence. Therefore, the prevalence of problematic behaviours such as disruptive behaviour, rule-breaking and attention-seeking are contextual (Rochat & Redinger 2021) and indicative of the psychosocial challenges that the learner experiences (Dube, 2019). Moreover, research conducted by Naicker et al., (2022) asserts that chronic child abuse or neglect can have accumulative effects such as chronic stress, if left unchecked, which in turn can impact on the present and future mental and physical health of children. These interrelated risk factors thereby compromise the biological, psychological and societal systems of child development (Newman & Newman, 2017).

f) Lack of parental involvement and parenting skills

In the current study the LST reported that the lack of setting boundaries for children at home, lack of parental involvement in their children's schooling and lack of parenting skills are psychosocial challenges that impact on the development of the FP learners at the school under study. Furthermore, the LST alluded that in many instances the parents of the learners

who experience psychosocial challenges are the root cause of the psychosocial challenges that their children are experiencing because of their inability to offer their children structure, nurturing and support at home, which impacts negatively on their children's holistic development. The LST suggested that since parents are facing so many psychosocial challenges, their children would fare better if they (the children) lived in a school hostel. The SBST representative concurred that most of the parents are not interested in their children's schooling and often only show interest in handouts that they get at school such as food parcels. In relation to the lack of parental involvement and parenting skills, the LST emphasized the following:

LST*: "If you can put these kids in a hostel and not send them home it would help because what do they have to go home to…the parents have their own issues."*

LST*: "There's no stability, they are being exposed to abuse, continuous abuse."*

LST*: "All those things* [referring to the psychosocial challenges] *spill off on their psychological state, being insecure and mental illnesses."*

Similar to the above finding of this study, Dube (2019) found that a lack of parental guidance and supervision often leads to disruptive learner behaviour as affected children tend to seek attention through negative behaviour. De Lannoy et al. (2018) also allude that some parents in low socio-economic communities do not know how to parent and that these parents are physically or emotionally unavailable to their children and often they turn to substance abuse and in some instances even exploit their own children. Furthermore, the development of emotional regulation and cognitive control of a child is influenced by the quality of parenting, thus the child will experience challenges in navigating complex and threatening environments if these vital developmental domains are not fully developed (Rochat & Redinger 2021). Similar to the educator participants' responses relating to lack of parental involvement, research conducted by De Lannoy et al., (2018) states that the absence of parental guidance can give rise to at risk behaviour and low educational outcomes. Furthermore, research conducted by Naicker et al. (2022) state that a lack of warmth and responsiveness, inconsistent behaviour and harshness are characteristics of poor parenting, which pose as key risk factors that increase the probability that children will develop externalising disorders, which include behavioural problems such as aggression as well as internalising disorders such as anxiety.

4.3.4.2 Psychosocial challenges that derive from the school

During the focus group discussion with the FP parent participants, one FP parent participant reported that bullying at school had also contributed to the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at the school under study. The FP parent participant stated that her daughter complained about being mocked at school by her peers. She also alluded that her daughter experienced physical bullying at school, however she indicated that she did not reported the matter to her child's educator. Instead, the parent suggested that her daughter respond to the bullying in a physical manner, thereby suggesting that her daughter use violence to resolve conflict. The parent participant's suggestion resonates with research conducted by Beets and Van Schalkwyk (2022) who assert that the social functioning of learners, which includes communication skills, listening skills, conflict management and problem solving, is influenced by adverse socio-economic circumstances as well as the lack of parents modelling suitable behaviour (Naicker et al., 2022). Therefore, sound social functioning should be promoted at schools, as it is essential to counteract the negative effects of adverse socio-economic circumstances (Beets & Van Schalkwyk, 2022). In addition, the SBST representative also alluded that bullying at school is part of the psychosocial challenges experienced by some learners at the school under study. He however did not wish to elaborate on such incidents; but stated that if the educators are made aware of such incidents, they do refer the affected learners to the representative at their school that assists with learner support and only if the affected learners are comfortable to discuss such incidents.

Based on the above-mentioned finding, it seems as if the responsibility for initiating action when bullying arises is with the victim as the school did not seem to have a proactive stance towards addressing bullying. The SMT representative however mentioned that the school hosted anti-bullying campaigns previously. Moreover, the WCED (2018) as well as the DBE (2012) have adopted a zero-tolerance approach regarding bullying and assert the importance of reporting incidents of bullying in order for the school to implement the necessary measures to deal with such behaviour in line with the school's code of conduct. Furthermore, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 stipulates that certain professionals such as teachers have a duty to report child abuse such as bullying by another child as well as other forms of child abuse causing physical injury, sexual abuse or deliberate neglect. Therefore, the reactive position in addressing bullying by the school, based on the view of the SMT representative, suggests that the school is not implementing its legal responsibility in protecting learners against different forms of abuse. No other educator participant reported

on any other psychosocial challenges that derived from the school that might hinder the development of the FP learners negatively. The following extracts reflect the incidents of bullying as reported by the two participants:

PP1: … *hulle spot vir haar of hulle lag haar uit. Hulle het al vir haar geslat ook al, toe sê ek slat hulle terug.* [… they mock her. They [peers] also hit her and I told her to hit them back]. *Sy huil baie gou. Sy raak gou emotional*. [She cries easily. She gets emotional very easily.]

SBST Representative: *[We actually have a teacher…well she's a facilitator from the department that assist us in that regard* [bullying]*, so if we pick up that there is a problem then we send the child, if the child is comfortable talking]*

Research conducted by Mahembe (2012) asserts that psychosocial challenges such as bullying is evident at schools and it impacts negatively on learners' self-confidence and self-efficacy. In addition, (Ringdal et al., 2020) state that being bullied and symptoms of anxiety and depression are strongly linked. Furthermore, De Lannoy et al., (2018) alludes that even though schools in low socio-economic communities are regarded as a safe space for learners, bullying still happens within the school grounds. Environmental factors such as poverty contribute to a range of behaviour problems such as gang activity and bullying (Allen et al., 2022).

4.3.4.3 Psychosocial challenges that derives from the community

The FP parents unanimously echoed that exposure to violence, gang-related shootings and drug abuse in the community are the most common psychosocial challenges experienced by their children. Similarly, the FP educator participants, the SMT representative, the SBST representative as well as the LST reported that gangsterism, drug abuse, alcohol abuse and exposure to violence in the community impacted negatively on the FP learners' development.

With regard to the gang-related violence, the one FP parent participant stated that the situation has become so extreme that the gangsters would even dress up in school uniform and as the children walk to school the gangsters would move and hide among the learners to get to their target. The same FP parent participant added that the situation becomes very traumatic for her children and therefore she does not allow them to play outside. She also mentioned that her children have seen how gangsters in the community shoot at each other.

The SBST representative stated that due to the high prevalence of violence in the community, many learners are exposed to violence daily, which affects them emotionally and it also impacts negatively on their academic progress, often leading to these learners being destructive at school. The SBST representative reported that unfortunately one learner at this school witnessed a murder and as a result the learner and her mom are in protective custody, which means the school has no contact with the learner to follow up on her wellbeing. Furthermore, the SMT representative alluded that many of the FP learners regard the gangsters as their role models and the learners often make paper guns in class and mimic the violent behaviour of the gangsters. In addition, the LST indicated that due to the trauma that some of these learners have experienced, they have already built up a defense mechanism that enables them to depict a certain level of impudence brought on by the psychosocial challenges that they experience in their daily livelihoods. Furthermore, the LST reported that some of the FP learners are extremely aggressive and this behaviour stems from the adversities that surround them at home and in their community. The following extracts are indicative of the continuous exposure to violence experienced by the FP learners at the school under study in their community:

SMT Representative: *"Die geweld … daar is geskietery en die gangsters is die rol modelle, dus wanneer die kinders iets kan maak in die klas is dit net guns wat gevou word met die papier." [The violence … there are shootings and the gangsters are seen as role models therefore whenever the learners have the opportunity to make something in class, they'll make paper guns].*

E2: *"Baie van hulle [FP learners] kom vertel jou van iemand wat doodgeskiet is of mense wat met bakstene gekap was, sulke goeters." [Many of our FP learners will tell you about someone that was fatally shot or about people that were assaulted with bricks, such stuff.]*

PP3: *"My seuns kind was maar graad R toe sien hy hoe hulle ń ander jong skiet voor ons. Hy praat nie daarvan nie, hy is net skrikkerig."* [My son was in grade R when he saw how another guy was shot in front of us. He does not talk about it; he is just very jittery or nervous.]

PP1: ***"****Ja… Veral in my pad…hulle [children] is deurmekaar daai tyd"* [Yes, especially in our road…the children are beside themselves during the time when the shootings happen.]

The responses of the participants are consistent with research conducted by De Lannoy et al. (2018), which states that the main challenges in low socio-economic communities are crime, violence, substance abuse and gangsterism. Similarly, Adelman and Taylor (2021) contend that community disorganisation, including violence and drugs, pose as barriers to development and learning. Moreover, children that live in low-income communities where they are exposed to continuous violence on the streets are at risk of suffering from post-traumatic stress as their safety is under threat (Newman & Newman, 2017). Thus, chaotic neighbourhoods or communities contribute to children acting out risky behaviours, have difficulty concentrating in class and experiencing other school-related challenges (Newman & Newman, 2017). Furthermore, a lack of care, love and support in the household can result in young boys being attracted to gang life because they regard gangsters as role models especially in low socioeconomic communities that experience chronic gang violence (De Lannoy et al., 2018). Therefore Naicker et al., (2022) assert that children who are continuously exposed to violence are likely to regard it as the norm and tend to enact it in their own behaviour during childhood and as adults.

The document analysis of the SIAS policy, DBE (2014) found that the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners include poverty, common social or economic features as well as violence and abuse at home and in their community. Similarly, the document analysis of the CSTL document states that poverty as well as violence and abuse at home or at school and the community are examples of barriers that prevent many South African children from learning and participating at school (DBE, 2014). Furthermore, the ISHP lists poverty as a major socio-economic factor that impact negatively on the health and development of children (DBE, 2012). These psychosocial challenges coincide with the psychosocial challenges listed in Table 4.3 as reported by the educator participants and the FP parent participants, thus an indication that the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners at this no-fee school are common to the contextual environment that they live in, which in turn highlights the need to effectively apply related policies to practice in order to mitigate the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners. With reference to bullying which emerged as a psychosocial challenge experienced by some FP learners at the school under study, the CSTL document stipulates that bullying, which is a component of safety and protection, is listed as one of the DBE's action areas, thus the DBE promotes a school environment that is free of violence, abuse and bullying (DBE, 2012). Thus, creating a learning environment that creates opportunities for all learners to develop optimally (DBE, 2012). The SBST policy of the school under study does not specify its anti-bullying

measures, but does however make provision for the procedures to be implemented to address barriers to learning.

Moreover, Erikson's fourth stage of psychosocial development theory focuses on children aged six to twelve years and the theory explains how a sense of industry versus inferiority influence their development and ultimately their wellbeing (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 117). Children that are exposed to positive environments whether at home or at school, where feelings of adequacy or competence is nurtured, validates their sense of competence, however children who are exposed to environments where they continuously receive overly critical responses give rise to a sense of inferiority (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 117). Similarly, Donald et al. (2016) assert that challenges in children's environments may lead to a sense of inferiority, thus hampering their chances of holistic development. In addition, Erikson's psychosocial development theory (1963) is aligned with the findings reported by the participants who asserted that the FP learners display feelings of anxiety. As per the current study's findings, the FP learners are often withdrawn due to the psychosocial challenges that they experience in their home environments as they are anxious about their mothers' wellbeing and consequently their own wellbeing as they are not always sure how their mothers' will ensure that their basic needs are met.

The findings of this study also resonate with Bronfenbrenner's (1986) ecological theory which postulates that all systems influence child development but the microsystem has potentially the greatest influence because of the proximal relations. Therefore, a lack of parental involvement or parenting skills, as reported by the educator participants', poses as a risk factor to holistic child development as it can give rise to many other risk factors such as a lack of love and support as well as a lack of a sense of belonging. Furthermore, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1986) states that its interrelated systems interact in a reciprocal manner and therefore risk factors experienced in the child's home environment (microsystem) such as poverty, absent fathers or marital problems between parents can impact negatively on child development and consequently contribute to learning barriers and possibly risky behaviour at school and other social settings, which form part of the mesosystem. Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory plays an important role in identifying interactions and interrelationships that can either hinder or promote the psychosocial well-being of learners (Eloff & Swart, 2018) and therefore Mahlo and Hugo (2013) assert that it is important for teachers to familiarise themselves with Bronfenbrenner's theory.

Relevant research, based on Bronfenbrenner's theory, conducted by Veiga et al. (2022) assert that family plays a crucial part in child development, hence families that experience household poverty still has the responsibility to ensure that a child's basic needs such as food and shelter are met and ultimately providing an environment that is favourable for optimal child growth and development. With reference to bullying that emerged as a psychosocial challenge experienced by FP learners at the school under study, the school forms part of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) mesosystem, thus it is imperative that the interaction between the school, educators and parents (microsystem) is effective in order to ensure that the child regards the school as a place of safety as supposed to a place where the child experiences psychosocial challenges such as bullying that impose a sense of fear, anxiety or insecurity. Schools can therefore be viewed as mesosystemic resources that can be influential in fostering resilience (Eloff & Swart, 2018). Furthermore, the community in which the child interacts with others, influences the child's development (Veiga et al, 2022). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) the child exists within interdependent layers of social relationships such as the family, friendship networks and neighbourhoods, which all impact on the child's development. The neighbourhood or local community forms part of an individual's mesosystem (Eloff & Swart, 2018). The parent participants as well as the educator participants stated that gang violence in the community as well as drug abuse and alcohol abuse are common social ills that impede on the development of the learners at the school under study. Therefore, Allen et al., (2022) assert that a child's growth is best nurtured by an effective mesosystem that promotes a sense of belonging.

4.3.5 Research question 2: What support is provided to address the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at the no-fee school?

The theme answering this research question is: Providing psychosocial support. This theme comprises three sub-themes, namely, (i) Providing psychosocial support at school level, (ii) Providing psychosocial support at education district level, (iii) Providing psychosocial support within the community

Psychosocial support centers around emotional, mental and social support offered to the affected learners through the SIAS referral network, which includes the services of psychologists and social workers (DBE, 2014), Research conducted by Eloff and Swart (2018); DBE (2014) as well as the Mothamaha (2021) state that children who experience psychosocial challenges may experience academic challenges which may lead to school

dropout, hence the need to provide academic support to learners that face adverse circumstances. Education creates an opportunity for children to acquire socio-emotional competence, which is described by UNICEF (2015) as the process of developing skills that are essential for learning such as social and emotional values, attitudes and competencies. Through the Life Skills curriculum for example, education enables children to know how to respond in high-risk situations such as in the event of abuse (Eloff & Swart, 2018). Therefore, education and subsequently academic support is regarded as an essential facet of psychosocial intervention that helps learners who experience psychosocial challenges to cope better (Eloff & Swart, 2018). Even though the educator participants of the current study revealed that they are not comfortable providing the needed psychosocial support to their affected FP learners, all educators are ultimately responsible for the provision of psychosocial support (Eloff & Swart, 2018).

4.3.5.1 Providing psychosocial support at school level

The six FP parent participants indicated that their children received academic support from their respective class educators with only three of the six parents indicating that the LST provided psychosocial support in the form of counseling to their children. The FP parent participants contended that the classroom interventions offered by the class educator and the LST focuses mainly on academic related challenges. The FP parent participants reported that the frequency of support offered by the LST to learners was once a month. With reference to the questionnaire completed by the FP parent participants, they marked the question relating to the effectiveness of the support offered as *"not applicable"* as they felt that it was not effective. One FP parent participant however mentioned during the focus group interview that she is of the view that the support offered by the school was effective, as her daughter has received ongoing support since grade R and she is currently in grade 4.

According to the FP parent participants the psychosocial support offered by the school is limited as some children are still awaiting psychosocial support in the form of counseling sessions with a psychologist or the intervention services of the district social worker. One parent participant mentioned that her child had witnessed a shooting incident a few years ago, and has still not received any psychosocial support from the education department in dealing with any trauma as a consequence of that experience. The following extracts refer:

PP5: *"My kind is nou in graad 4 en sy kry ondersteuning van die skool van graad R af."* [My child is currently on grade 4, but she's received support from the school since grade R.]

PP6: "*My seuns kind was graad R toe sien hy hoe ń ander jong voor ons geskiet word…hy is baie skrikkerig…hy het nooit sielkundige hulp gekry nie."* [My son was grade R when he saw how someone was shot…he is very anxious…he never received psychological help.]

The FP educator participants reported that they implement classroom interventions, which focuses on academic challenges, which in their view stems from the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners. The FP educator participants however reported that although they try to implement classroom interventions as regularly as possible, overcrowded classrooms hinder them from providing effective support to learners in need. The number of FP learners requiring support from the LST at the school under focus, was high and many learners were on the LST's waiting list, as reported by the SMT representative. Similarly, the FP educator participants mentioned that the learners receive limited support from the LST because she services the school only once a week. Furthermore, both the SMT and SBST representatives reported that due to the high demand for interventions from the LST, she mainly focuses on learners that experience academic challenges. The SMT contended that the support provided by the LST is inadequate because she is only able to assist a few learners; yet the need is so big. The SMT representative also mentioned that the LST also chooses only one grade from the FP whom she can focus on per year. The following extracts refer:

SMT Representative: *"As jy [educator] nou byvoorbeeld in graad 2 in kwartaal 1 of 2 agterkom hier is ń kind wat vir jou alles kan sê maar kan niks skryf nie en omdat dit so baie lank vat* [referral process] *is die kind al in graad 3 en die process begin van voor af."* [If the educator notices in grade 2, term 1 or 2 that a learner is only able to verbally communicate, but not able to express himself or herself in written form such a referral takes very long before it's attended to and the learner might already be in grade 3 then the referral process starts all over.]

SMT Representative*: "Sy is so min hier en as sy nou kom dan is sy nou meer op die akademie. Sy kom maar net by n handtjie vol uit."* [She's only here once a week and then she sees to the academic side of things. She only reaches a handful of children].

The LST conceded that she offered limited support to learners in need because of her limited presence at the school. Moreover, this particular school has a support representative from the WCED that assists the school with learner referrals, because of the LST's limited availability since she also services another school in the same education district. According to the SMT representative, the intervention offered by the support representative is very limited as the support representative would merely speak to the learners that display aggressive and disruptive behaviour at school and often the learners do not take such intervention seriously. The SMT representative stated that for this reason, the class educators have to step in at times and use teaching and learning time to address risky behaviour brought on by the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners.

With reference to the referral process, The SBST representative indicated that staff has to follow the referral process as set out in the SIAS document (DBE, 2014) to request much needed counseling sessions for the learners who struggle with psychosocial challenges. The FP educator participants indicated that they follow the referral process as set out by the DBE in cases where higher levels of support are required. In Addition, the LST indicated that they do have SBST meetings during which learner referrals for psychosocial support are discussed and the related referral documents such as the Support Needs Assessment (SNA) form is checked and verified for escalation to the DBST. The LST also further cautioned that the proper completion of the referral documents plays an important part in the referral process. She added that incomplete or incorrectly completed documents as well as omitted parent signatures cause a delay in the entire process, which the LST regarded as an astronomical loss for the affected learner with regard to the provision of timeous support. Furthermore, the FP educators responded that due to the LST being at their school only once a week to assist, they sometimes report psychosocial-related incidents to the school principal who in turn forwarded it to the LST or the DBST.

The SMT representative, the SBST representative and the LST consequently all asserted that the support offered at school level to the FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges is not effective due to the unavailability of key role-players such as the district psychologist and social worker. They elaborated that limited access to the services of the LST, is regarded as a major challenge that impacts negatively on the support offered by the school. These participants were also of the view that the waiting period for psychosocial support from the DBST is too long and therefore impacts child development negatively. In summary the school-based participants highlighted the following barriers to effective

psychosocial support for learners at school: inadequate education specialist services and a tedious, bureaucratic process in accessing support. The extracts below refer:

LST Representative: *"To get the ongoing support it becomes a problem."*

SBST Representative: *"Everything is a process it's not like you gonna get it now."*

SMT Representative: *"Daar's net een person vir soveel skole en as hulle [psychologists] kom dan kan hulle net een kind toets terwyl daar 'n elle lange lysie is."* [There's only one person for so many schools and if the psychologists come then they can only test one child even though there is a long list.]

LST Representative: *"It takes a while to get assistance, it prolongs the development of the learner, it makes matters worse"*

E2: *"Dis so 'n lank proses en die kinders word daar ook half gefail*." [It is such a long process and often it fails the child.]

In relation to the psychosocial support provided at school level, document analysis revealed that the DBE (2014) stipulates the training of educators in providing psychosocial support to learners as a minimum national requirement. However, the educator participants at the school under study were of the view that they are not adequately trained to offer psychosocial support to their learners. Relevant literature states that limited support services, ineffective and inconsistent support, inadequately trained teachers as well as large class sizes pose as challenges in providing effective psychosocial support to the affected learners (Daniels, 2013; Hlalele, 2012; Makhalemele & Nel, 2016; Modisaotsile, 2012; Nel et al., 2016; Setlhare et al., 2016). In addition, the findings that emanated from the focus group interviews and the individual interviews with the participants regarding the delay in receiving psychosocial support align with the view of by Hlalele (2012) who asserts that psychosocial support in low socioeconomic communities is neither consistent nor effective as the support structures offered are not functioning effectively (Nel et al., 2016). Moreover, the findings of the current study also highlight the importance of effective collaboration with external role-players in the process of support provision, as asserted by (Makhalemele & Nel, 2016).

The SIAS policy (DBE, 2014) states that the DBE has adopted a holistic approach regarding learner support provision that focuses on a range of possible barriers to learning that a learner may experience such as extrinsic barriers in the home, school and community environment as well as barriers related to disabilities. As stipulated in the SIAS policy (2014) psychosocial support has been identified as a crucial need in schools and forms part of nine priority areas that the Department has to attend to. The following table indicates the support process outlined by the policy that should be followed by the educators, the LST, the SBST and the DBST. Table 4.3 illustrates an abstract of the support process and the role of the relevant stakeholders as mentioned in SIAS (DBE, 2014):

Table 4.3: The process to be followed in accessing support for learners (DBE, 2014):

Teacher 	The teacher identifies learners at risk through observations, reflections and formative actions. The teacher verifies his/her findings with the parent or caregiver. Document to be completed and signed Support-Needs Assessment Form 1 (SNA1). The teacher formulates an individual support plan (ISP) for the learner based on the information gathered and sets a review date for at least once a term. If the support given by the teacher proves to be ineffective, he/she will involve the SBST.
SBST 	The SBST reviews the support provided by the teacher and the impact thereof. Assess and facilitate further learner support needed and implement it for an agreed period of time – involve teacher and parents – Documentation SNA 2. The SBST can also collaborate with external or internal resources to address learner related challenges once a cycle of intervention and support was implemented and facilitated by the SBST. If the SBST support plan proves to be ineffective and the learner did not benefit thereof, the SBST can request additional support or a higher level of support from the DBST. In exceptional cases to ensure the safety of a learner who is vulnerable to abuse, direct referrals are allowed.
DBST	The DBST determines what type of support is needed to support the learner and explore alternative collaborative options. The DBST consults with SBST, Teacher and parent / guardian of the learner in need of support. Documentation SNA 3.

For the purposes of this study, it was important to highlight the roles of LSTs in order to clarify the roles policy prescribes for LSTs versus the perception of the school-based participants. According to the WCED specialised support services (WCED, 2017) the support provision of LSTs include: provision of supplementary teaching to learners who

require additional support; support learners in groups, either in the learners' classroom or on a withdrawal basis in the learning support classroom; conducting scholastic assessments, planning and implementing effective teaching strategies; providing guidance to the SBST, liaising with staff, parents and other relevant stakeholders; LSTs are closely linked with the education district and may share duties with other learning support staff; LSTs are managed and supervised by the District Learning Support Coordinator and Learning Support Advisors that forms part of the District/Circuit Based Support Team (D/CBST).

In addition, the SIAS (2014) policy also indicates external stakeholders whom the SBST and DBST can approach for support. These external sources can be community based and can include: health care practitioners or a school health team as well as psychologists and therapists from the Department of health, social workers from the Department of Social Development and programmes offered by Non-Profit Organisations. The findings from the educator participants indicate that they follow the referral process (DBE, 2014) in order to obtain the necessary support from the specialists within the DBST. However, insufficient human resources such as the accessibility of the education district social worker or psychologist within the referral network hinder the execution of effective psychosocial support to the most vulnerable learners at this particular school. In addition, research conducted by Ayaya et al. (2020) highlights the need in providing teachers with adequate training in dealing with learners who experience diverse learning needs. Lastly, even though there are policies in place that outline the learner support offered and the process to be followed, relevant literature suggest that psychosocial health and well-being policies are available, but fragmented (Namome et al., 2021; Skeen et al., 2022). Similar to other studies, this study also found that the provision of psychosocial support was inadequate.

In order to alleviate food insecurity that some of the learners at the school under study experience, the school explores different initiatives at school in trying to provide food for the learners. The school under study has a fully functioning feeding scheme that provides the learners with one meal a day. The FP parent participants reported that the school offers a feeding scheme and at times they also receive food parcels from the school, which is very helpful. In addition, the SMT representative stated that the school also manages its own garden project to enhance the meals offered to its learners. The SBST reported that the school's feeding scheme, which also operates during the school holidays ensures that learners get at least one nutritional meal a day, which helps to lessen the possibility of some

learners going to bed hungry. As indicated by the other research participants, the LST also mentioned that the feeding scheme is a positive facet of this school and often it seems that some learners only come to school to get a meal, which further indicates the level of poverty that some of these learners experience. The data extracts below refer:

SBST Representative: "*We have a feeding scheme programme, which can help the child, but I mean that's like nothing compared to what our learners are facing on a regular basis."*

PP5: *"Hulle* [children] *kry kos by die skool se feeding scheme."* [They get food at the feeding scheme.]

PP2: *"Die feeding scheme help."* [The feeding scheme helps.]

Research supports the current study's findings regarding the benefits that the school's feeding scheme offers its leaners in need. Research conducted by Mothamaha (2021) suggests that offering feeding schemes and vegetable gardens at school addresses poverty and ultimately eases the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners. Furthermore, Atmore et al., (2012) state that the provision of feeding schemes and food gardens not only improves the nutrition of the learners in need, but also holds health and educational benefits for vulnerable children. Similarly, Sanousi and Devereux (2019) contend that school feeding programmes are implemented to reduce poverty and in so doing enhance learning capacity.

4.3.5.2 Providing psychosocial support at education district level

Document analysis of the SIAS policy indicated that the District-based Support Team (DBST) is a management structure at district level that is responsible for coordinating and promoting various teaching and learning support provision such as the identification, assessment and addressing barriers to learning within a specific education district (DBE, 2014). The responsibilities of the DBST in terms of learner support provision include: responding to requests for assistance from SBSTs, to assess eligibility of requests made by the SBST by administering relevant assessments, to provide direction with regards to concessions, accommodations, strategies, programmes, services and resources that will enhance the school-based support plan for learners in need of support and to identify learners for outplacement into specialised settings such as special schools (DBE, 2014). In addition, collaboration between the DBST and the Department of Social Development is key in ensuring a seamless system of support to learners who experience psychosocial barriers

and requires support that goes beyond the scope of the school level (DBE, 2014).

With reference to the SIAS referral process (DBE, 2014), the SMT representative was of the view that the entire referral process takes too long, because of inadequate resources in the education department. For example, when the LST and/or the SBST determines that a learner needs higher level (more intensive) support from the district-based support team (DBST), meaning support from specialist education officials based in the education district, such support is not timeously provided. One of the reasons for such delay is that there are too few specialists such as education psychologists and social workers appointed by the education department and their workloads are extremely high, given the demand for such services in the public schooling system. Furthermore, the LST stated that following the prescribed referral process is the only way of getting any type of psychosocial support and that the education district psychologist or social worker, depending on the nature of the referral, comes to the school only once to do the required assessment with the affected learner. However, the much-needed ongoing psychosocial support is almost impossible. The LST further mentioned that the psychologist or social worker can only do a maximum of four counselling sessions with the affected learner due to their workload.

The one FP educator indicated that at times the affected learner(s) do receive continuous support from the education district-based social worker and the respective educator would also receive feedback timeously about the case, however the feedback is kept very brief due to confidentiality. Another educator however indicated that when a learner experiences psychosocial challenges to the extent that it impacts negatively on his or her academic progress and the educator applies for that particular learner to receive an assessment accommodation in the form of a reader or a scribe, such a process takes very long. The FP educator alluded that the referral system is therefore failing learners in need of psychosocial support.

With reference to the psychosocial support provided by the DBST to the school under study, the SBST representative and the LST mentioned instances of effective as well as ineffective interventions. One example involved two siblings who were abused by their stepfather and with the guidance and intervention from the district social worker as well as external role-players such as the South African Police Services (SAPS) they managed to remove the girls from the risk-stricken environment. The collaboration between the SBST of the school under study, the DBST and the SAPS ensured that the siblings could be taken to a place of safety

and in so doing create an opportunity for them to receive the necessary psychosocial support which in turn would benefit their growth and development. In addition, the LST referred to a case where the support provision from the DBST was not as effective. It also involved siblings that attended the school under study who were subjected to different types of abuse, but the case was referred back and forth between the DBST and the Department of Social Development (DSD) and unfortunately the children were only removed after three years and placed in a place of safety. For this reason, the LST alluded that in some cases a delay with the required documentation and a lack of relevant role-players such as social workers and psychologists prolongs the support for the learner. The LST further alluded that when the SBST of the school under study requested for specialist intervention from the DBST, the education district psychologist or social worker did the necessary assessment of the learner that has been referred for specialist intervention, however the provision of ongoing intervention by the DBST was not adequate in some cases due to the prolonged psychosocial provision response time. The SBST representative also alluded that the psychosocial support provision response time from the DBST depends on the circumstances and severity of the case, as the DBST do not attend to all cases immediately. Furthermore, the FP educator participants indicated that the referral and support provision from the DBST is a long process, thus they felt that the entire referral process fails the learners in need of support. The extracts below refer:

LST: *"I referred to both the district and the DSD immediately… but the whole thing was just stalling."*

LST: *"That SNA is a very long form, which can be cut down to much less…what teacher has the time out of everything that they do and still fill in the 5 – 6 page SNA for 15 children per class…It prolongs the development of the learner, it makes matters worse."*

SBST Representative: *"So if there is a case, we'll refer the learner to the LST and she refers to the DBST… but everything is a process."*

The views of the SBST representative as well as the LST relating to the psychosocial support provision at district level correlates with research conducted by Nel et al., (2016) which state that even though educators regard the DBST as a support structure, they find the referral process for learners experiencing barriers to learning protracted and feel overburdened by all the documentation such as the SNA1 that forms part of the referral

process. Furthermore, research conducted by Makhalemele and Payne-van Staden (2017) state that a lack of support from the DBSTs brings to the fore further challenges faced by educators such as not being able to adequately provide the necessary psychosocial support to the learners facing adverse circumstances.

4.3.5.3 Providing psychosocial support within the community

In relation to the psychosocial support offered in the community, both the SMT and the SBST representatives reported that the community churches sometimes offer programmes to help the parents with skills development to better their chances of finding employment and the churches run soup kitchens to ease food insecurity. According to the SBST, these initiatives include counselling for parents and learners as well as awareness workshops relating to the dangers of drug abuse, in order to alleviate the psychosocial challenges that some of their learners face on a daily basis. However, the SMT representative indicated that most parents are simply not interested. The LST representative also indicated that the programmes offered by some of the community churches focus on building positive behaviour with the learners. One of the six FP parent participants reported that a community member started a soccer club in the community with the aim of rehabilitating young children that are partaking in substance abuse. Another FP parent participant mentioned that a retired teacher who resides in the community offers home-based schooling during the school holidays in an attempt to offer a safe space for learners during the school holidays. On the contrary, another FP parent participant was of the view that there is no support in the community. The participants affirmed the following relating to support offered in the community:

SBST Representative: *"We also have other role-players … external … for example we have a child that we can't deal with, the mom is on drugs, the child is staying with the grandmother. … there is a church currently helping him … providing the necessary guidance and also working closely with the family through the school so there is a connection."*

SMT Representative: *"Die kerke doen baie vir hulle* [gemeenskap]*, soos die sop kombuis …"* [The churches offer community-based initiatives such as a soup kitchen.]

PP6: *"My kinders doen home-based schooling in die vakansie by ń retired onderwyser wat oorkant die pad bly."* [My children attend home-based schooling during the school holidays, offered by a neighbour, who is a retired teacher."

The findings that emerged in relation to the provision of psychosocial support in the community indicate that there is some level of support offered by community members such as churches, sportsmen and retired professionals. The community-based support can be regarded as a protective factor in relation to child development within the community especially if all role-players including parents support such community initiatives. Research conducted by Malcolm et al. (2015) state that a lack of recreational facilities such as a gym or play parks contributes negatively to the wellbeing of both learners and parents. Furthermore, Setlhare and Wood (2020) allude that effective community engagement between educators and community leaders is needed in order to facilitate an effective collaboration that will enable relevant community role-players to provide psychosocial support to the learners in need at community level.

The following emerged from the document analysis with reference to the support that should be provided at schools and at district level in order to alleviate the psychosocial challenges experienced by the learners. As stipulated in the SBST policy of the school under study, the support offered by the school includes: consultations with the school principal, the identification of learners who experience learning barriers, drafting an ISP and providing intervention support to all learners who experience social, emotional and unique barriers to learning, maintaining a good partnership with parents, monitoring and liaising with the DBST on matters relating to learners who are referred for specialist support from a psychologist or social worker, provide alternative resources needed for learner development and networking with external community based role-players. As stipulated in the SBST policy of the school under study, it follows the SIAS (DBE, 2014) referral process with reference to the identification of learners experiencing learning barriers and the provision of the required intervention support.

The SBST policy of the school under study does not refer to or use the term psychosocial support, even though it refers to the provision of social, emotional and unique barriers. Furthermore, the SBST policy states that the DBST will refer learners in need to a psychologist, social worker or therapist. In the current study, contrary to what is stipulated in the SBST policy, the FP parent participants were of the opinion that the educators at the school under study do not engage with them on a regular basis relating to the identification of learners who is experiencing learning barriers and the provision of intervention planned for such learners. A FP parent participant stated that she was only informed during the fourth term assessment period of that particular academic year that her grade two child is

struggling academically and that her child will not be promoted to the next grade. The parent participant asserted that there were no parent intervention meetings with her beforehand. Another FP parent participant indicated that her child who is in grade one was exposed to a shooting incident when he was grade R and prior to that a stabbing incident that involved his dad and although he is withdrawn and anxious, she has not been contacted by the school to discuss an intervention plan that will assist him to cope better with the adverse circumstances that he has been exposed to.

Based on the experiences of the two FP parent participants relating to the identification, intervention offered and maintaining a good partnership with parents of learners who experience learning barriers, it is imperative that the SBST of the school under study, ensure that policy is effectively applied in the provision of psychosocial support to the learners. Furthermore, both SMT and SBST representatives, as well as the LST and FP educator participants mentioned that their first SBST meeting to discuss and eventually refer learners who experience learning barriers to the LST or the DBST occurs at the beginning of term two. However, the SBST policy of the school stipulates that SBST meetings should occur at least twice a term and that the purpose of such meetings was to either present and discuss the problem-solving process for cases that had been referred for learner support intervention or for the development of educators. The educator participants also stated that due to the limited availability of the LST at the school under study, they can only refer a minimal number of five to eight learners per class within a selected grade, this practice differs from what is stipulated in the school's SBST policy. Furthermore, the educator participants asserted that when learners are referred for specialist intervention from a district psychologist or social worker, the waiting period for such support provision is too long. The SBST policy of the school under study states that its mission is to support all learners who experience social, emotional and unique barriers to learning. The educator participants are therefore of the view that they are not providing the much-needed psychosocial interventions effectively to all affected learners, and therefore, the mission of the SBST is not always effectively enacted.

Document analysis of the CSTL document found that there is currently no national guideline for psychosocial support as it is regarded as a relatively new concept (DBE, 2014). Schools are however encouraged to refer learners in need of psychosocial support to educational psychologists and occupational therapists, who form part of the DBST (DBE, 2014). Thus, the DBST is regarded as a support structure (DBE, 2014). In addition, the document also

alludes that the essential part of psychosocial support is to make time to listen to learners when they express their challenges and aspirations (DBE, 2014). Furthermore, the CSTL document also reiterates that schools must ensure the provision of psychosocial support to its learners, ensure the implementation of a referral network relating to psychosocial support provision and ensure that educators who provide psychosocial support to learners are trained (DBE, 2014). The CSTL document does not however clarify when the educators should provide psychosocial support to the learners experiencing psychosocial challenges and how this would impact on the educator's and learners' teaching and learning time in terms of curriculum delivery. Furthermore, as stated in the CSTL document, the Department of Social Development and Health, NGO'S, Community-based organisations (CBO's) and faith-based organisations (FBO's) are regarded as key external partners as these entities can also link schools to psychologists and social workers that can assist with psychosocial support (DBE, 2014). Similarly, to the SIAS document (DBE, 2014), the CSTL document also outlines the same DBE support referral protocol to be followed if a teacher identifies a learner that experiences psychosocial challenges (DBE, 2014). In addition, the CSTL document lists nutritional support, also referred to as the school feeding scheme as an action area of the DBE, as it addresses barriers to learning as a result of hunger or malnutrition (DBE, 2014). Furthermore, the CSTL document also promotes access to social welfare services, which include the child support grant, as it can alleviate childhood poverty (DBE, 2014).

In the current study, the LST stated that once a referral for psychosocial support provision was accepted by the DBST, the district psychologist or social worker has one to four counseling sessions with the affected learner, but the provision of ongoing psychosocial support becomes challenging due to the high demand of learners in need of psychosocial support compared to the number of psychologists and social workers allocated within an education district. As stated in the CSTL document (DBE, 2014), the LST also alluded to the importance of establishing a referral network for psychosocial support provision, therefore the Department of Social Development forms part of the referral network whom she liaises with regarding support provision. Furthermore, the SMT representative stated that even though the DBE provides psychosocial support workshops that enable educators to provide psychosocial support, the educators at the school under study are of the view that they are not adequately trained. According to the CSTL document, it is the responsibility of the school principal and the SMT to ensure that the development plans for individual educators increases the school's capacity to provide psychosocial support to its learners in need

thereof. In the current study it however emerged that the educator participants prefer specialist intervention from the DBST to provide psychosocial support provision. Moreover, in line with the CSTL policy, the school under study has a functional feeding scheme that provides meals to its learners in need on a daily basis and in addition, depending on the resources available, the school also provides food parcels to its learners that experience poverty at home.

In terms of support offered, the document analysis of the ISHP found that the policy focuses on addressing the health and well-being of learners enrolled in public schools in South Africa and that the education sector in collaboration with school health services, endeavors to assess every learner individually at least once per phase, during the four educational phases (DBE, 2012). The following assessments relates to FP learners as stipulated in the ISHP: vision, speech and basic hearing, measurement of height, weight and body mass, fine and gross locomotor problems, oral health screening, screening for chronic illness such as TB and HIV/AIDS and basic mental health and psychosocial risk assessment (DBE, 2012). In addition, the policy also alludes to the importance of the child support grant as it helps alleviate child poverty in South Africa (DBE, 2012). In the current study, the FP parent participants indicated that they rely on the child support grant, which serves as a financial income for the entire household. In addition, the LST stated that the community clinic forms part of the school's referral network for support provision

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) support structures influences the development of the learner, therefore support for learners should start in the innermost structure, being the microsystem. Nel et al. (2016) states that a lack of support from teachers or other support personnel (micro and mesosystems) to support learners with barriers to learning impacts negatively on the development of such learners. With reference to the current study's findings, both the parent and educator participants (microsystem) stated that the intervention support offered by the school is inadequate due to the limited availability of the LST and overcrowded classrooms. Therefore, inefficient collaboration between the micro and mesosystems impede negatively on learner development. Similarly, a lack of communication or interaction between the parents and educators also impact on support provision. For example, one of the parent participants of the current study stated that she was only informed during term four that her child is experiencing learning barriers, she was of the opinion that if the educator informed her earlier, more could have been done to assist her child. In South African schools, support structures as formulated by various policy

documents such as the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014), CSTL (DBE, 2014), ISHP (DBE, 2012) as well as the SBST policy of the school under study are located in the macrosystem (Mahlo & Hugo, 2013; Nel et al., 2016; Smit et al., 2020).

The current study found that the support provision by the DBST (macrosystem) had mixed reviews, with regard to its effectiveness. Furthermore, the current study also found that what is stated in policy (macrosystem) was not applied in practice in some cases. For example, the educator participants alluded to the long waiting period for support provision from the DBST due to the limited availability of the education district psychologist and social worker. Therefore, the inconsistency between policy (macrosystem) and practice (support provision by the DBST as the mesosystem), directly impacts learner development, as all the systems are interrelated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, the ineffective or inadequate application of policy has significant consequences for learners in need of support.

Furthermore, the community in which a child grows up forms part of the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986), which is an important contributing factor to the lived experiences of learners. This importance is highlighted by one of the findings of the current study, which reported that academic support was offered by a retired teacher, and counseling was offered by a church in the community. These community interventions had a positive impact on the development of affected learners (microsystems). Therefore, effective interaction in the micro and mesosystems is essential for optimal learner growth (Nel et al., 2016). In addition, Erikson's psychosocial theory highlights the importance of providing support to elementary school-aged children (5-12 years) as they are developing a sense of industry versus inferiority (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 117). By offering guided assistance and applying differentiated teaching and assessment methods such as utilising engaging lesson materials to learners that experience barriers to learners, teachers can facilitate a sense of industry and feelings of competence (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 118).
The current study also found that the FP educator participants provided the necessary support interventions to the learners experiencing psychosocial challenges, thereby ensuring that all learners develop a sense of competence.

4.3.6 Research question 3: How can the psychosocial support given to FP learners at the no-fee school be enhanced?

Based on the focus group interviews with the FP parent and educator participants as well as the individual interviews with the SMT representative, the SBST representative and the LST, it emerged that all the participants were of the view that the psychosocial support offered at the school under study and at education district level requires enhancement.

The FP parent participants emphasized that their children need more support sessions with the LST, as it is currently limited to once a month depending on the availability of the LST. Similarly, the SMT representative emphasized that the school under study needs a LST that can be based at the school on a full time basis since the FP learners at the school experience many psychosocial challenges. The FP educator participants also indicated that even though they provide academic support as often as possible, this too becomes challenging with overcrowded classrooms and often higher levels of support is required from a psychologist or social worker. Therefore, they duly stated that the school under study desperately needs a dedicated LST and a social worker that will be based at the school daily, given the social context of the school.

The SMT representative stated that the learner-teacher ratio at the school under study varies from 39 to 53 learners per educator. The SMT representative, who is also a FP educator, further stated that educators often use teaching and learning time to offer psychosocial support to learners who display poor behaviour as a result of the adverse circumstances that they experience. This in turn impedes on the delivery of the curriculum. Both the SMT and the SBST representatives as well as the LST respectively listed the following as psychosocial support solutions: A strategic intervention plan that guides the support offered to the FP learners as well as allocated time that will be dedicated for classroom interventions as well as a full time LST. Furthermore, the SBST representative also mentioned that the school under study can enhance the psychosocial support offered to its learners by collaborating with external role-players and arrange development camps for the learners that will give them the opportunity to explore other settings that may influence their mental, emotional and social state positively. The excerpts below refer:

SMT Representative: *"Ek dink hulle [WCED] kan meer maatskaplike werkers by die skole sit, want ons moet nou nog van die les tyd neem om met dit* [psychosocial support] *te deal"*

[I think that they need to employ more social workers at the schools, because as educators we must attend to psychosocial support during teaching and learning time.]

Based on the psychosocial challenges that the learners at this school experience as well as the severity and frequency thereof, the SBST representative highlighted that the school needs a dedicated counselor or more psychologists within the education district that can offer counseling to the learners in need over a longer period than what is currently provided, since, according to him, counseling is a process and not something that can be done over two or three sessions. Similarly, the LST, the SMT representative and the FP educator participants suggested that having a psychologist based at the school under study, will enable them to provide ongoing timeous psychosocial support to FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges. The educator participants were of the view that access to more education district psychologists and social workers will reduce the support referral response time and ultimately enhance the psychosocial support offered to FP learners. All six FP parents also indicated that intervention sessions with a psychologist would help their children to cope with the psychosocial challenges that they experience. The following excerpts regarding psychosocial support enhancement refer:

SBST Representative: *"They [DBST] don't attend immediately to a case." "There isn't someone at school that offers counseling … we need more school psychologists, because there are not enough for the number of schools that we have."*

SMT Representative: *"Daar's net een persoon vir soveel skole en as hulle* [district psychologists] *kom dan kan hulle net een kind toets terwyl daar ń elle lange lysie is*." [There is only one district psychologist for so many schools and when they are able to come to a school, they can only test one learner even though there's a long list of learners to be tested.]

LST: *"If we had a permanent psychologist at the school, it would help." "We have an outreach team at the other school that I am at and there you can already see the difference having someone [psychologist] come in once a week, it does make a big difference and there's a big time difference so that does help."*

E3: *"So ons benodig iemand* [LST or a social worker] *wat gereeld one-on-one kan doen met daai kinders* [learners in need of support]." [So we need someone, a LST or a social worker that can do one-on-one intervention sessions with the FP learners in need of support.]

PP1: *"Die ekstra goeters* [referring to counseling] *en klasse sal vir hulle lekker help, dit is mos individual dan is daar mos nie klomp kinders nie nou kan hulle vry voel om te praat."* [The extra lessons and counseling sessions will help the learners a lot and it is individually done so then they will feel free to talk.]

Moreover, the SMT representative mentioned that even though the educators attend skills development workshops offered by the WCED, the educators are hesitant to get too involved with psychosocial cases as they feel that they are not fully trained or qualified to deal with challenges of this nature, therefore they felt that in-depth psychosocial skills training is required in order to enhance the psychosocial support offered to the affected learners at the school under study. In addition, the LST was of the view that a flexible curriculum that caters for the needs of the learners experiencing psychosocial challenges, will enable educators to provide effective support to such learners.

The FP educators also indicated that many of their learners do not receive any support from their parents, therefore the WCED should collaborate with the community to develop life skills workshops to empower the parents and perhaps assist with a rehabilitation center for parents in the community. The FP educator participants alluded that parental involvement contributes positively towards effective support provision. The following excerpts refer:

LST Representative: " … be realistic try and make the curriculum more flexible … if this is school A this is their context so this is what I can expect from them."

SMT Representative: "*Hulle* [WCED] *gee vir ons workshops, maar soms kyk ons die goeters* [psychosocial challenges] *mis of jy wil nie betrokke raak nie … hulle* [psychologists and social workers] *wat meer bevoegt is om daarmee te werk moet meer in die skole in kom."* [The WCED offer workshops for educators to address psychosocial challenges experienced by learners, however they feel that they are not adequately capacitated to offer such support to the affected learners and feel that it is best if the education district psychologist and social worker deal with such cases.]

E2: *"Empower die ouers met life skills … a rehabilitation center in the community that offers counseling."* [Empower the parents with life skills]

Research conducted by Nel et al., (2016) echo the views of the different participant

groupings in the current study that more human resources such as psychologists (Moolla, 2011) and social workers are needed. The SMT and SBST representatives as well as the LST and FP educator participants also highlighted the need to reduce the tedious bureaucratic referral process to access support, which overburdens the educators. The FP educator participants' concerns regarding intervention support provision in overcrowded classrooms are shared by Mahlo (2017) and Mothamaha (2021).

Similar to the views of the educator participants in the current study, research conducted by Nel et al., (2016) states that training for educators to better support learners experiencing psychosocial challenges is imperative as it will positively impact the development of the FP leaners. In addition, Mothamaha (2021) and Setlhare et al., (2016) asserted that educators are not adequately prepared for the contextual challenges experienced by learners, resulting in educators being anxious, overwhelmed and demotivated to intervene in the learners' psychosocial needs. This statement coincides with the educator participants' view of the current study. Therefore, they require specialist support provision to enhance the psychosocial support offered to the learners that experience psychosocial challenges at the school under study. The current study's findings suggest that educators cannot cope with the demands on them for psychosocial support. They are therefore at risk of experiencing burnout. Bernstein and Batchelor (2022); Setlhare et al. (2016) state that in South Africa, learners at under-resourced schools, face extensive psychosocial challenges that negatively affect their wellbeing as well as the wellbeing of their educators. Furthermore, research conducted by Kratt (2018) states that the wellbeing of teachers has grown in importance and it is ultimately regarded as a significant component of effective teaching. Similarly, Puertas Molero et al. (2019) assert that positive mental wellbeing of educators leads to improved teaching practice. In addition, research conducted by Nel et al., (2016); Reynolds et al., (2019), as well as Skae et al., (2020), relating to the enhancement of psychosocial support emphasise the need for an adaptable curriculum. The literature thus coincides with the view of the LST relating to the need of a flexible and context specific curriculum.

With reference to the enhancement of psychosocial support offered at school and district level, the analysis of the CSTL document brought to the fore a section listed as advocacy and communication, which basically builds support for the problem and solutions relating to the care and support for vulnerable learners such as learners experiencing psychosocial challenges (DBE, 2014). Advocacy at school level requires the identification of individuals, such as the SMT representative or a member of the School Governing Body (SGB). These people should then speak at meetings within the school setting or at local community

meetings with the aim of winning support, volunteers and resources that are needed to enhance the support offered at school level to its vulnerable learners (DBE, 2014). In addition, advocacy at district level requires high-level commitment from external departments for collaboration and joint programmes needed to enhance the support offered (DBE, 2014).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1986), proximal interactions between the family and other major settings such as school and public policies influence the development of learners. With reference to the current study's findings it emerged that both the parent and educator participants were of the view that more human resources such as a dedicated LST, and an education district psychologist or social worker are required to enhance the provision of psychosocial support. When considering how psychosocial support provision can be enhanced at school and district level in a South African context, it is important to consider all the systems that shape learner development. For example, policies relating to psychosocial support such as the CSTL (DBE, 2014), SIAS (DBE, 2014) and the ISHP (DBE, 2012) are formulated by the DBE, situated at the macro level, after which it is the responsibility of the education districts to implement policy at the meso level and lastly, schools are required to implement policy at the micro level (Mahlo & Hugo, 2013). As per Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), the inefficient proximal interaction between the macro (DBE), meso (district) and micro (school) systems are impacting the development of the FP learners at the school under study negatively. Therefore, based on the current study's findings, the enhancement of psychosocial support mainly depends on the re-evaluation and possibly redesign of the psychosocial support provision policies.

According to Maree (2021), Erikson's approach was based on guidance, education and counseling that aided people to enhance their skills, develop a sense of self and accept responsibility for their decisions. Erikson's psychosocial development theory also asserted that people have the ability to successfully navigate the psychosocial challenges in their lives with adequate support structures (Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2012, p. 118). Accordingly, the participants of the current study alluded that in order to enhance the psychosocial support offered to the affected FP learners so that they have the ability to successfully navigate the adverse circumstances that they experience, an effective support structure between the school, education district and the DBE is needed. The current study's findings made reference to the inconsistency between the psychosocial support guidelines as stipulated in policy and the application thereof in practice, thereby impacting negatively on the provision of effective psychosocial support to the FP learners in need thereof.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the participants' lived experiences relating to the psychosocial challenges that the FP learners at the school under study experience and the provision of psychosocial support offered to the affected learners. The school under study has a functional SBST that strives to provide the necessary psychosocial support to its learners through academic support by the respective educators and the LST. However, due to inadequate training in psychosocial support provision and the complex psychosocial challenges experienced by its learners, the educators felt overwhelmed and therefore require specialist intervention from the education district's psychologists and social workers to enhance the psychosocial support provision at their school. The participants also stated their views on how to close the gap between policy and practice in order to enhance psychosocial support delivery to all its learners who experience psychosocial challenges.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study endeavored to explore the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole and how the psychosocial support provided can be enhanced. This chapter offers an overview of the findings of this study as well as the significance and limitations of the study. Lastly it discusses the recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of findings

The participants of the current study were familiar with the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners. Furthermore, the educator participants were fairly knowledgeable with the learner support referral process as set out in the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014). The participants however alluded that in order to offer effective psychosocial support to all learners in need, the process requires enhancement. The main findings of the study are:

- FP parent participants listed poverty, unemployment, overcrowded homes, family structures/types, bullying at school, exposure to violence in the community and exposure to gang related violence as psychosocial challenges experienced by their children which derived from home, school and the community in which they reside.

- Educator participants, including the LST, listed poverty, unemployment, overcrowded homes, family structures/types, exposure to violence at home, exposure to drug abuse, exposure to alcohol abuse, exposure to emotional abuse, exposure to physical abuse, exposure to sexual activities, lack of parental involvement and parenting skills, bullying at school, exposure to violence in the community and exposure to gang related violence as psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners, which derived from their homes, school and community.

- The school's SBST policy provided guidelines in relation to the support process to be followed by the educators, including the LST and school principal regarding learners who experience barriers to learning.

- The educators mainly offer academic support to FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges, as they were not adequately trained to provide psychosocial support in the form of counselling.

- Educator participants mentioned that they used teaching and learning time to address the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners, which in turn, impacted on curriculum delivery.

- The school had access to the services of the LST once a week, as she serviced another school. The educators alluded that due to the context of the school they needed the services of the LST on a permanent basis.

- Due to the limited availability of the LST, she mainly focused on academic support and due to the high demand for psychosocial support she was unable to assist all FP learners who experienced psychosocial challenges.

- In cases where higher level psychosocial support is required, such as specialist intervention from the district psychologist or social worker, a referral is made to the DBST.

- The SIAS policy (DBE, 2014), the CSTL policy (DBE, 2014) and the ISHP (DBE, 2012) make provision for psychosocial support, however due to the high demand for specialist intervention at the school under study and the limited availability of the district psychologist and social worker, the referral process and support is often delayed.

- All participants stated that the referral process was not effective due to the delayed response time. The educator participants also stated that the psychosocial support offered by the DBST was not ongoing and this impacted on learner well-being.

- Educator participants were frustrated with the limited availability of the LST, the district psychologist and social worker, as they felt that it impacted negatively on the psychosocial support offered to the FP learners and thus impeded on learner development.

- All the participants had mixed reviews with regard to the effectiveness of the psychosocial support provision by the DBST.

- The LST mentioned that the Department of Social Development formed part of the external network whom she escalated referrals to for higher level support when she was unable to source psychosocial support from the DBST.

- The school had a functional feeding scheme that provided meals to learners daily. They also had a vegetable garden to enhance the meals provided to learners in need.

- Some churches in the community offered psychosocial support to families who experience adverse circumstances, whilst a retired teacher assisted learners with academic support.

- The educator participants, including the LST, felt that the psychosocial support offered by the school under study could be enhanced by adequately equipping all educators with psychosocial support skills.

- All participants alluded that due to the high demand for psychosocial support at the school under study, the school required the services of a LST, a psychologist or social worker on a full-time basis, which in turn will reduce the referral response time.

- Document analysis of the SIAS policy (DBE, 2014), the CSTL policy (DBE, 2014) and the ISHP (DBE, 2012) found that these documents are interrelated and offer guidelines relating to learner support. All three documents state that learners experiencing psychosocial support should be referred to specialists such as a psychologist or social worker, however these documents require amendments that accommodate schools where the demand for psychosocial support is high and consequently access to more district psychologists and social workers should be possible in practice,

- The SBST policy of the school states that all learners experiencing social, emotional and unique barriers will be supported, however in practice only a limited number of learners were supported.

- The LST recommended an adaptable curriculum that supports the diverse learning needs of learners that experience adverse circumstances as she was of the opinion that it would enhance the psychosocial support offered to learners.

5.3 Significance of the study

The findings of this study emphasised the negative impact that psychosocial challenges have on the development of FP learners at a no-fee school and consequently the important role that schools must fulfill in offering effective psychosocial support to these learners (McLaughlin, 2018 & Savahl et al., 2017). Furthermore, this study accentuated the commonalities and differences between the views of the parent and educator participants relating to the psychosocial challenges experienced by the FP learners at the research site and the support provided to alleviate the challenges. In addition, this study also highlighted the gap between policy and practice in terms of psychosocial support provision and subsequently explored how the psychosocial support provision could be enhanced. This study can therefore contribute towards the limited body of research on the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners specifically and the support offered to them at school and at district level. Furthermore, this study creates awareness of the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at a no-fee school and can thus contribute towards the amendments of related policies and processes to ensure that the development of the FP learners who need psychosocial support, is prioritised in theory and in practice.

5.4 Limitations of this study

The findings of a qualitative study cannot be transferred to broader populations (Creswell, 2007), however the aim of the study was to provide a rich description of the participants' lived experiences. Another limitation of this study could perhaps be that it only includes the views and experiences of educators and FP parents at one no-fee school on the Cape Metropole. This study does not include the views of the FP learners who experienced psychosocial challenges, which would've portrayed a more in-depth understanding of their lived experiences. Potential social desirability (Simons et al., 2018) emerged whilst conducting this study, as two FP parent participants were a bit reluctant to share the psychosocial challenges experienced by their children in detail and the impact that it had on the development of their children and instead, they tried to draw attention to the positive aspects of their home environment only.

5.5 Recommendations to enhance psychosocial support provision

Based on the findings of this study the following was recommended by the educator participants as well as the parent participants in terms of enhancing the psychosocial support offered at schools:

- A fulltime school based LST. LSTs are teachers who are equipped with specific knowledge of remedial teaching and learning (Phala & Hugo, 2022). Therefore, teachers rely on the expertise of LSTs to offer guidance and assist with learner support strategies and processes in order to enhance the psychosocial support offered to FP learners that experience psychosocial challenges.
- Revision of the SBST policy to improve support strategies. Nong (2020) contends that the SBST policy should capture the distinctiveness of a school and its learners in need of support.
- More education district-based psychologists and social workers to meet the demand of intensive psychosocial support. Psychologists and social workers are trained professionals that are better equipped than teachers in offering psychosocial support, however due to the scarcity of such professionals (Mahwai & Ross, 2023), the psychosocial support offered is inadequate.
- A shorter response time from the DBST for support referrals. Time constraints within the district-based psychosocial support services impact on the enhancement of psychosocial support provision (Nel et al., 2016; Mahwai & Ross, 2023).
- Psychosocial skills training for educators. Although teachers are regarded as a well-positioned resource (Mahwai & Ross, 2023) in offering psychosocial support to learners experiencing psychosocial challenges, Pillay et al. (2023) assert that teachers lack basic knowledge about psychosocial interventions.
- Skills based training for unemployed parents. According to Beasley et al. (2022), parents raising children in poverty, experience many pressing challenges such as limited financial resources. Therefore they have a desire to improve their level of education through educational opportunities such as career training, which will enable them to secure better job opportunities and alleviate the adversities that they experience.

5.6 Recommendations for further study

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations for further research can focus on the strengths and limitations of the psychosocial support referral and provision process as set

out by the DBE (2014) in order to close the gap between policy and practice. In addition, a feasibility study could be conducted that centers around the strengths and limitations of an adaptable curriculum that supports the diverse learning needs of learners that experience adverse circumstances and the impact that it would have on the development of FP learners at a no-fee school. Lastly, a quantitative study that focusses on the psychosocial support provision patterns across schools based in low socio-economic communities is also recommended for further research.

5.7 Conclusion

This study explored the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners as well as the psychosocial support offered to them at one no-fee school in the Cape Metropole and in addition, to ascertain if the psychosocial support offered needs to be enhanced. Based on the findings of this study it emerged that the psychosocial challenges that many FP learners at the no-fee school experienced derived from various social ills in the community and in their home environments. Some of the common psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at this school included poverty and frequent exposure to severe violence. Consequently the psychosocial challenges that the FP learners experienced had a negative impact on their development as many of them displayed aggressive and disruptive behaviour at school and many struggled to keep up with the demands of the curriculum.

This study also revealed that even though the school in question had a high demand for psychosocial support, its access to a LST was limited to once a week. Furthermore, the LST played a vital role in terms of the support and referral process at this school. In addition, the limited capacity of education district-based specialist support could not meet the high demand for specialist support, leading to delayed provision of psychosocial support to FP learners in desperate need of such support. Lastly, the findings of this study indicated that there is room for enhancement in terms of the psychosocial support offered at the no-fee school. In order for it to be deemed effective, the enhancement of the psychosocial support offered requires a collaborative approach from all relevant role-players such as the parents of the learners who experience psychosocial challenges, the educators, the LST, the SBST, the DBST, policy makers and external role-players.

REFERENCES

Adelman, H., & Taylor, L. (2021). *Addressing barriers to learning: In the classroom and schoolwide*. Retrieved May 17, 2021, from http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/barriersbook.pdf

Allen, K. A., Gallo Cordoba, B., Ryan, T., Arslan, G., Slaten, C. D., Ferguson, J. K., Bozoglan, B., Abdollahi, A., & Vella-Brodrick, D. (2022). Examining predictors of school belonging using a socio-ecological perspective. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, *32*(9), 2804-2819.

Anderson, C. (2010). Presenting and evaluating qualitative research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *74*(8). https://doi.org/10.5688/aj7408141

Arifin, S. R. M. (2018). Ethical considerations in qualitative study. *International Journal of Care Scholars*, *1*(2), 30-33. https://doi.org/10.31436/ijcs.v1i2.82

Atmore, E., Van Niekerk, L. J., & Ashley-Cooper, M. (2012). Challenges facing the early childhood development sector in South Africa. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *2*(1), 120-139.

Ayaya, G., Makoelle, T. M., & van der Merwe, M. (2020). Participatory action research: A tool for enhancing inclusive teaching practices among teachers in South African full-service schools. *Sage Open*, *10*(4). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244020963576.

Batra, S. (2013). The psychosocial development of children: Implications for education and society—Erik Erikson in context. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, *10*(2), 249-278. https://doi.org/10.1177/0973184913485014

Baxen, J. (2015). Population and education in the Western Cape. *The state of the population in the Western Cape Province*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Beasley, L. O., Jespersen, J. E., Morris, A. S., Farra, A., & Hays-Grudo, J. (2022). Parenting challenges and opportunities among families living in poverty. *Social Sciences*, *11*(3). https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11030119

Beets, S., Van Schalkwyk, I., & Kirsten, D. K. (2022). Exploring educators' experiences of the social functioning of learners in middle childhood. *South African Journal of Education*, *42*(1). https://doi.org/10.15700saje.v42nla1887

Benight, C. C., & Bandura, A. (2004). Social cognitive theory of posttraumatic recovery: The role of perceived self-efficacy. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, *42*(10), 1129-1148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brat.2003.08.008

Bernstein, C., & Batchelor, T. P. (2022). Qualitative exploration of workplace demands, resources and bullying among teachers in South African schools: Implications for individual and organisational well-being. *South African Journal of Education*, *42*(2). https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v42n2a2081

Biggerstaff, D., & Thompson, A. R. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA): A qualitative methodology of choice in healthcare research. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *5*(3), 214-224. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880802314304

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *9*(2), 27-40. https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027

Booys, H. R., Adendorff, S. A., & Moodley, T. (2015). Grandparents as primary caregivers: a factor in the academic functioning and behaviour of their grandchildren. *Journal of Educational Studies*, *14*(2), 139-154.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bright World Guardianships. (n.d.). *An introduction to the British education system*. Retrieved July 10, 2021, from https://www.brightworldguardianships.com/en/guardianship/british-education-system/

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, *22*(6), 723-742.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist*, *32*(7), 513-531. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.32.7.513

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. Retrieved September 18, 2019, from https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2005-01926-019

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Evans, G. W. (2000). Developmental science in the 21st century: Emerging questions, theoretical models, research designs and empirical findings. *Social Development*, *9*(1), 115-125.

Carr, L. T. (1994). The strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research: what method for nursing? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *20*(4), 716-721. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1994.20040716

Casale, M. (2015). The importance of family and community support for the health of HIV-affected populations in Southern Africa: What do we know and where to from here? *British Journal of Health Psychology*, *20*(1), 21-35. https://doi.org/10.111/bjhp.12127

Cappella, E., Frazier, S. L., Atkins, M. S., Schoenwald, S. K., & Glisson, C. (2008). Enhancing schools' capacity to support children in poverty: An ecological model of school-based mental health services. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, *35(5)*, 395-409.

Chetty, R. (2015). Social complexity of drug abuse, gangsterism and crime in Cape Flats' schools, Western Cape. *Acta Criminologica: African Journal of Criminology & Victimology*, *2015*(sed-3), 54-65.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. Sage Publications Inc.

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Commentary: Thematic analysis. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, *12*(3), 297-298. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. (1996). Retrieved February 11, 2022, from https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications Inc.

Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Five different approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications Inc.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative & mixed methods approaches.* SAGE Publishing.

Cyster, J. (2021). Equal Education: *Government must not allow COVID-19 to widen inequality in our education system*. Retrieved February 20, 2022, from https://equaleducation.or.za/2021/01/21/statement

Damons, B., & Cherrington, A. M. (2020). Reimagining community schools as beacons of hope and possibility in the South African context. *Education as Change*, *24*(1), 1-27. https://doi.org/10.25159/1947-9417/4699

Daniels, D. (2013). *The role of school counsellors in supporting teaching and learning in schools of skills in the Western Cape*. [Master's thesis, University of the Western Cape]. https:// http://hdl.handle.net/11394/3244

Daniels, K. E. (2016). *Health promotion: The design of a school health index score card to assess psychosocial health and well-being in early childhood development at primary schools*. [Doctoral thesis, University of the Western Cape]. http://hdl.handle.net/11394/5437

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, *49*(3), 182-185. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012801

De Lannoy, A., Fortuin, A., Mpofu-Mketwa, T., Mudiriza, G., Ngcowa, S., Storme, E., & Smith, C. (2018). Unpacking the lived realities of Western Cape youth. *Exploring the well-being of young people residing in five of the most deprived areas in the Western Cape Province*. Cape Town: Department of the Premier: Western Cape Government and Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.

Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2005) Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In N.K. Denzin &Y.S. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (3rd Ed.), Sage, Thousand Oaks.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Department of Basic Education. (2014). *Care and support for teaching and learning programme*. Retrieved July 20, 2021, from https://www.education.gov.za

Department of Basic Education. (2012). *Integrated school health programme*. Retrieved July 20, 2021, from https://www.education.gov.za>HealthPromotion

Department of Basic Education. (2014*). Policy on screening, identification, assessment and support*. Retrieved July 20, 2021, from https://www.education.gov.za

Department of Basic Education. (2012). School safety framework. *Addressing bullying in schools*. Retrieved June 24, 2023 from https://www.kzneducation.gov.za>schoolsafetyframework_bullying_reader

Department of Basic Education. (2020). *Standard operating procedure for the containment and management of COVID-19 for schools and school communities*. Retrieved July 15, 2022, from https://www.education.gov.za/portals/0/documents

De Villiers, A., et al. (2012). "HealthKick": Formative assessment of the health environment in low-resource primary schools in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. *BMC Public Health*, *12*(1), 1-11.

Dolbin-MacNab, M. L. (2015). Critical self-reflection questions for professsionals who work with grandfamilies. *Grandfamilies:The Contemporary Journal of Research, Practice and Policy. 2*(1). https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/grandfamilies/vol2/iss1/6

Donald, D., Lazarus, S., & Lolwana, P. (2010). *Educational psychology in social context: Ecosystemic applications in Southern Africa*. Oxford University Press.

Donald, D., Lazarus, S., & Moolla, N. (2016). *Educational psychology in social context: ecosystem applications in Southern Africa (5th ed.)*. Oxford University Press Southern Africa, Cape Town.

Dube, M. (2019). Poverty, Gender and Primary Education: Experiences of Learners in Elandskop, KwaZulu Natal. *Global Journal of Health Science*, *11*(5). https://doi.org/10.5539/gjhs.v11n5p67

Eloff, I., & Swart, E. (Eds.). (2018). *Understanding educational psychology*. Juta (Pty) Limited.

Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society (2nd ed.).* New York: Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity youth and crisis* (No. 7). WW Norton & company.

Gonzalez-DeHass, A. R., & Willems, P. P. (2012). *Theories in educational psychology: Concise guide to meaning and practice*. Rowan and Littlefield Publishing Group Inc.

Grantham-McGregor, S., Cheung, Y. B., Cueto, S., Glewwe, P., Richter, L., & Strupp, B. (2007). Developmental potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries. *The Lancet*, *369*(9555), 60-70. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)60032-4

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 105-117)*. Sage Publications, Inc.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research (pp. 193-215)*. Sage Publications Ltd.

Haq, Z. U. (2013). *Promoting early childhood development through community health worker interventions: Implementation and measurement issues in rural Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina). Retrieved June 25, 2021, from https://search.proquest.com/openview/6121665a7f659b39a393c635c1481e1a/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750

Hammersley, M. (2013). *What is qualitative research?* Retrieved July 15, 2020, from https://www.bloomsburycollections.com

Hlalele, D. (2012). Psychosocial support for vulnerable rural school learners: In search of social justice!. *Journal for New Generation Sciences*, *10*(2), 67-73.

INEE. (2016). *INEE Annual Report.* Retrieved November 10, 2021, from *https://inee.org/sites/default/files/resources/INEE_2016_Annual_Report.pdf*

INEE. (2018). *Facilitating Psychosocial wellbeing and social and emotional learning.* Retrieved November 10, 2021, from https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8SB5P7X/download

Iwu, C. G., & Opute, A. P. (2019). Eradicating poverty and unemployment: Narratives of survivalist entrepreneurs. *Journal of Reviews on Global Economics*, *1*(8), 1438-1451. https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-7092.2019.08.127

Jensen, S. K., Berens, A. E., & Nelson, C. A. (2017). Effects of poverty on interacting biological systems underlying child development. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, *1*(3), 225-239. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-4642(17)30024-X

Joffe, H. (2011). Thematic analysis. *Qualitative research methods in mental health and psychotherapy: A guide for students and practitioners*. Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Kaljee, L., et al. (2017). The "Teachers Diploma Program" in Zambian Government schools: A baseline qualitative assessment of teachers' and students' strengths and Challenges in the Context of a School-Based Psychosocial Support

program. *International Education Studies*, *10*(2), 92-103. http:dx.doi.org/10.5539/ies.v10n2p92

Karimupfumbi, F., & Dwarika, V. M. (2022).Teachers' experiences of using the screening, identification, assessment and support strategy to support learners who present with characteristics of dyslexia. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *12*(1), 1107. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v12i1.1107

Kim, Y. (2011). The pilot study in qualitative inquiry: Identifying issues and learning lessons for culturally competent research. *Qualitative Social Work*, *10*(2), 190-206. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010362001

Kleintjies, S., Abrahams, T., Piko Yako, J., & Tomlinson, M. (2022). *Shifting perspectives: Towards a holistic understanding of child and adolescent mental health*. https://ci.uct.ac.za/child-gauge-overview

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, *42*(8), 846-854. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159x.2020.1755030

Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 4: Trustworthiness and publishing. *European Journal of General Practice*, *24*(1), 120-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375092

Kratt, D. (2018). Teachers' perspectives on educator mental health competencies: A qualitative case study. *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, *2*(1), 22-40.

Krishnan, V. (2010, May). Early child development: A conceptual model. In *early childhood council annual conference*. Edmonton, AB, Canada: University of Alberta.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.

Lund, C., Abrahams, Z., Garman, E., van der Westhuizen, C., & Sorsdahl, K. (2021). *Environment matters*: *The social determinants of child and adolescent mental health*. https://www.hst.org.za>publications>child gauge 2021

Mahembe, M. (2012). *The psychosocial experiences of immigrant learners at a primary school in the Western Cape* [Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University]. http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/71841

Mahlo, D. (2017). Teaching learners with diverse needs in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng Province, South Africa. *SAGE Open*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017697162

Mahlo, D., & Hugo, A. (2013). Learning support teachers' views on the implementation of inclusive education in the Foundation Phase in Gauteng, South Africa. *Journal of Social Sciences*, *37*(3), 301-306. https://doi.org/10.1080/09718923.2013.11893228

Mahwai, L. P., & Ross, E. (2023). Life orientation teachers' experiences of providing psychosocial support to high school learners in the Johannesburg West district. *South African Journal of Education*, *43*(4), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v43n4a2199

Majid, U. (2018). Research fundamentals: Study design, population, and sample size. *Undergraduate Research in Natural and Clinical Science and Technology Journal*, *2*(12), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.26685/urncst.16

Makhalemele, T., & Nel, M. (2016). Challenges experienced by district-based support teams in the execution of their functions in a specific South African province. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *20*(2), 168-184. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1079270

Makhalemele, T., & Payne-van Staden, I. (2017). Enhancing teachers' self-efficacy within full-service schools: A disregarded aspect by the District-Based Support Team. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *22*(9), 983-996. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1413687

Makusha, T., & Richter, L. (2014). The role of black fathers in the lives of children in South Africa. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 38*, 982-992. https://hdl./handle.net/20.500.11910/2118

Manuel, D., et al. (2020). The relation between subjective well-being and career aspirations amongst a sample of adolescents in low socioeconomic status communities in Cape Town. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *48*(8), 2702-2722. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22449

Maree, J. G. (2021). The psychosocial development theory of Erik Erikson: Critical overview. *Early Child Development and Care*, *191*(7-8), 1107-1121. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2020.1845163

Mavungu, E. M. (2013). Provider expectations and father involvement: learning from experiences of poor "absent fathers" in Gauteng, South Africa. *African Sociological Review/Revue Africaine de Sociologie*, *17*(1), 65-78

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, *41*(9), 1002-1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

McGuirk, P. M., & O'Neill, P. (2016). Using questionnaires in qualitative human geography. In I. Hay (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography,* (pp. 246-273). Don Mills, Canada: Oxford University Press.

McKaiser, E. (2021, July 14). *Opinion: Don't overlook the deeper roots behind the violence and looting in South Africa*. *Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2021/07/14/south-africa-violence-looting-deeper-roots/

McLaughlin, C. (2018). Schools, psychosocial well-being and agency: From fragmentation to coherence. *European Journal of Education*, *53*(3), 281-292. https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12281

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Modisaotsile, B. M. (2012). *The failing standard of basic education in South Africa.* Pretoria: Africa Institute of South Africa.

Mmotlane, R., Winnaar, L., & Wa Kivilu, M. (2009). Personal characteristics that predict South Africans' participation in activities of their children's schools. *South African Journal of Education*, *29*(4). https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v29n4a294

Moolla, N. (2011). *The role of school psychologists in school development in South Africa: The challenge of intersectoral collaboration* [Doctoral dissertation, University of the Western Cape]. http://hdl.handle.net/11394/1709

Moore, T., McDonald, M., & McHugh-Dillon, H. (2014). Early childhood development and the social determinants of health inequities: A review of the evidence. *Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and the Royal Children's Hospital.* Retrieved March 23, 2021, from http://digitalscholarship.tsu.edu/mlcejs_info

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 1: Introduction. *European Journal of General Practice*, *23*(1), 271-273. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375093

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General practice*, *24*(1), 9-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091

Mothamaha, L. V. (2021). *The lived experiences of educators who provide psychosocial care and support in a disadvantaged South African primary school* [Doctoral dissertation, UNISA]. https://hdl.handle.net/10500/28317

Mwoma, T., & Pillay, J. (2015). Psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable children in public primary schools: Challenges and intervention strategies. *South African Journal of Education*, *35*(3).https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v35n3a1092

Naicker, S., Berry, L., Drysdale, R., Makusha, T., & Richter, L. (2022). Families: Foundations for child and adolescent mental health and well-being. In M. Tomlinson, S. Kleintjes, & L. Lake (Eds.), *South African Child Gauge 2021/2022: Child and Adolescent Mental Health*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, (pp. 71-85). http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/19980 ,

Namome, C., Winnaar, L., & Arends, F. (2021). *Improving psychosocial support in SA schools during and after COVID-19 as part of a recovery plan.* (HSRC Policy Brief, February). http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/15829

Nel, M. (Ed.). (2014). *Life orientation for South African teachers*. Van Schaik Publishers.

Nel, M., & Grosser, M. M. (2016). An appreciation of learning disabilities in the South African Context. *Learning Disabilities--A Contemporary Journal*, *14*(1), 79-92.

Nel, N. M., Tlale, L. D. N., Engelbrecht, P., & Nel, M. (2016). Teachers' perceptions of education support structures in the implementation of inclusive education in South Africa. *Koers*, *81*(3), 1-14. http://dx.doi.org/10.19108/koers.81.3.2249

Nelson Mandela Foundation. (2005). Emerging Voices: A report on education in South Africa rural communities. Retrieved July 10, 2021, from https://www.hsrcpress.ac.za

Newman, B. M., & Newman, P. R. (2017). *Development through life: A psychosocial approach*. Cengage Learning.

Niemiec, C. P. (2022). Capacities and vulnerabilities in the classroom: Self-determination theory and the promotion of proactive human nature among students. In K. Allen, M. Furlong, D. Vella-Brodrick, & S. M. Suldo (Eds.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology in Schools,* (pp. 25-37). Routledge.

Nieuwenhuis, R., & Maldonado, L. C. (Eds.), (2018). *The triple bind of single-parent families: Resources, employment and policies to improve wellbeing* (1st ed.), Bristol University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt2204rvq

Nong, S. I. (2020). The functions of SBST and DBST in South African primary schools. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, *5*(7), 1243-1248.

Ochieng, P. A. (2009). An analysis of the strengths and limitation of qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, *13(1)*, 13-18.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L., & Wynaden, D. (2001). Ethics in qualitative research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, *33*(1), 93-96.

Phala, T. A., & Hugo, A. (2022). Difficulties in teaching Grade 3 learners with reading problems in full-service schools in South Africa. *African Journal of Disability (Online)*, *11*, 1-9. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v11i0.906

Pham, L. T. M. (2018). Qualitative approach to research a review of advantages and disadvantages of three paradigms: Positivism, interpretivism and critical inquiry. *University of Adelaide*.

Phitidis, K., (2020). *Where light shines through. Tales of can-do teachers in South Africa's no-fee public schools*. Bookstorm.

Pianta, R., Downer, J., & Hamre, B. (2016). Quality in early education classrooms: Definitions, gaps, and systems. *The Future of Children*, 119-137.

Pillay, J., Patel, L., & Setlhare-Kajee, R. (2023). Teacher awareness of psychosocial support available as per the Integrated School Health Policy in South Africa. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *13*(1), 1172. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v13i1.1172

Puertas Molero, P., Zurita Ortega, F., Ubago Jiménez, J. L., & González Valero, G. (2019). Influence of emotional intelligence and burnout syndrome on teachers well-being: A systematic review. *Social Sciences*, *8*(6). https://doi.org/10.3390/sosci8060185

Rabiee, F. (2004). Focus-group interview and data analysis. *Proceedings of the nutrition society*, *63*(4), 655-660.

Republic of South Africa. (2005). *Children's Act 38 of 2005*. Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://www.gov.za/documents/childrens-act

Republic of South Africa. (1950). *Group areas Act 41 of 1950*. Retrieved March 29, 2019, from https://www.sahistory.org.za/.../group_areas_act.pdf

Republic of South Africa. (2002). Mental Health Care Act 17 of 2002. Retrieved January 10, 2020, from https://www.gov.za/documents/mental-health-care-act

Republic of South Africa. (2003). *National Health Act 61 of 2003*. Retrieved January 10, 2020, from https://www.gov.za/documents/national-health-act

Republic of South Africa. (2004). *Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004*. Retrieved January 10, 2020, from https://www.gov.za/documents/social-asssistance-act

Republic of South Africa. (1996). *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996*. Retrieved January 10, 2020 , from https://www.gov.za/documents/south-african-schools-act

Research site. (n.d.). *School based support team policy*. Internal document.

Reynolds, A. J., Ou, S. R., Mondi, C. F., & Giovanelli, A. (2019). Reducing poverty and inequality through preschool-to-third-grade prevention services. *American Psychologist*, *74*(6), 1-27. https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000537

Ringdal, R., Espnes, G. A., Eilertsen, M. E. B., BjØrnsen, H. N., & Moksnes, U. K. (2020). Social support, bullying, school-related stress and mental health in adolescence. *Nordic Psychology*, *72*(4), 313-330. https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2019.1710240

Rochat, T., & Redingeri, S. (2021). A life-course perspective on the biological, psychological and social development of child mental health. *South African Child Gauge 2021/2022*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Rowley, J. (2014). Designing and using research questionnaires. *Management research review*, *37*(3), 308-330.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American psychologist*, *55*(1), 68.

Sadie, N. (2018). *Grades 1 to 3 learners' perceptions of psychosocial well-being in at-risk school communities* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria]. https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/69987/Sadie_Grades_2018.pdf

Saracho, O. N. (2023). Theories of child development and their impact on early childhood education and care. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *51*(1), 15-30.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01271-5
Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. Pearson education.

Savahl, S., et al. (2020). The relation between children's participation in daily activities, their engagement with family and friends, and subjective well-being. *Child Indicators Research*, *13*, 1283-1312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-019-09699-3

Savahl, S., et al.. (2015). Subjective well-being amongst a sample of South African children: A descriptive study. *Child Indicators Research*, *8*, 211-226. https://doi.org/10.1007/s121187-014-9289-8

Savahl, S., Casas, F., & Adams, S. (2017). Children's subjective well-being: Multi-group analysis among a sample of children from two socio-economic status groups in the Western Cape, South Africa. *Child Indicators Research*, *10*, 473-488. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12187-106-9392-0

Savahl, S., Malcolm, C., Slembrouk, S., Adams, S., Willenberg, I. A., & September, R. (2015). Discourses on well-being. *Child Indicators Research*, *8*, 747-766. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-014-9272-4

Schotte, S., Zizzamia, R., & Leibbrandt, M. (2018). A poverty dynamics approach to social stratification: The South African case. *World Development*, *110*, 88-103. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.05.024

Setlhare, R., & Wood, L. (2020). A collaboratively constructed action leadership framework for sustainable learner support in contexts of adversity. *Educational Action Research*, *28*(2), 227-241. https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2018.1559070

Setlhare, R., Wood, L., & Meyer, L. (2016). Collaborated understandings of context-specific psychosocial challenges facing South African school learners: A participatory approach. *Educational Research for Social Change*, *5*(2), 18-34. http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2221-4070/2016/v5i2a2

Silbert, P & Mzozoyana, T. (2019, June 13). Legacy of youth protest sees learners scarred by mental health issues. *Daily Maverick*. Retrieved August 21, 2023, from https://www.dailymaverick.co.za>Opinion

Simons, A., Koekemoer, K., Niekerk, A. V., & Govender, R. (2018). Parental supervision and discomfort with children walking to school in low-income communities in Cape Town, South Africa. *Traffic Injury Prevention*, *19*(4), 391-398. https://doi.org/10.1080/15389588.2017.1420904

Skae, V. A., Brown, B. J., & Wilmot, P. D. (2020). Teachers' engagement with learners in inclusive foundation phase classrooms. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, *10*(1), 1-11. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v10i1.873

Skeen, S., et al.. The role of educational institutions in promoting and protecting mental health across childhood, adolescence and youth. *South African Child Gauge 2021/2022*. Cape Town: Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

Skovdal, M., & Campbell, C. (2015). Beyond education: What role can schools play in the support and protection of children in extreme settings? *International Journal of Educational Development*, *41*, 175-183. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.02.005

Smit, S., Preston, L. D., & Hay, J. (2020). The development of education for learners with diverse learning needs in the South African context: A bio-ecological systems analysis. *African journal of disability*, *9*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v9i0.670

Sobane, K., Gastrow, M., & Oosthuizen, A. (2021). HSRC research during COVID-19: The importance of policy briefs in supporting engagements between researchers and policymakers. *HSRC Review. 19*(1), 9-11. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/1 6002

Spaull, N. (2013). Poverty & privilege: Primary school inequality in South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *33*(5), 436-447.

Spaull, N., & Jansen, J. D. (2019). South African schooling: The enigma of inequality. *A study of the present situation and future possibilities*. Springer.

Statistics South Africa. (2016). Education series volume III. *Educational enrolment and achievement*. Retrieved October 28, 2019, from https://www.statssa.gov.za

Statistics South Africa. (2020). *National poverty lines*. Retrieved November 23, 2021, from https://www.statssa.gov.za

Statistics South Africa. (2021). *Quarterly labour force survey*. Retrieved July 12, 2021, from https://www.statssa.gov.za

Swartz-Filies, S. P. (2017). Mental health of coloured female teachers working in historically disadvantaged special schools in the Cape Metropole (Doctoral dissertation]. Retrieved May 28, 2021, from https://etd.uwc.ac.za/handle/11394/6359

Thanh, N. C., & Thanh, T. T. (2015). The interconnection between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods in education. *American Journal of Educational Science*, *1*(2), 24-27.

Timæus, I. M., Simelane, S., & Letsoalo, T. (2013). Poverty, race, and children's progress at school in South Africa. *The Journal of Development Studies*, *49*(2), 270-284. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2012.693168

Tufford, L., & Newman, P. (2010). Bracketing in qualitative social work. *Qualitative Social Work*, *11*(1), 80-96. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325010368316

UNICEF. (2019). *Annual Report.* Retrieved July 9, 2021, from https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/UNICEF-annual-report-2019_2.pdf

UNICEF. (2021). *Promoting, protecting and caring for children's mental health.* Retrieved January 20, 2022, from https://www.unicef.org/media/114636/file/SOWC-2021-full-report-English.pdf

UNICEF. (2015). Reimagine the future. *Innovation for every child*. Retrieved May 30, 2023, from https://www.unicef.org/serbia/media/7116/file

Vanclay, F., Baines, J. T., & Taylor, C. N. (2013). Principles for ethical research involving humans: Ethical professional practice in impact assessment Part I. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*, *31*(4), 243-253. https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2013.850307

van den Berg, W., & Makusha, T. (2018). *State of South Africa's fathers 2018.* Cape Town: Sonke Gender Justice and Human Sciences Research Council. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11910/12398

Van der Berg, S., et al. (2011). *Low quality education as a poverty trap*. Retrieved November 28, 2021, from https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2973766

Veiga, G. R. S., da Silva, G. A. P., Padilha, B. M., & de Carvalho Lima, M. (2022). Determining factors of child linear growth from the viewpoint of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory*. Jornal de Pediatria, 99*(3), 205-218. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jped.2022.10.009

Wainwright, N., et al. (2020). Developing children's motor skills in the Foundation Phase in Wales to support physical literacy. *Education 3-13*, *48*(5), 565-579. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2019.1633374

Western Cape Education Department. (2007). *Annual performance plan*. Retrieved August 21, 2023 from https://www.wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za>documents>stratplan07>index-app07

Western Cape Education Department. (2018). *Bullying at schoo*l. Retrieved February 11, 2023, from https://www.westerncape.gov.za>general-publication>bullying-school

Western Cape Education Department. (2020). *G – WCED Guideline: Psycho-social support*. Retrieved January 21, 2022, from https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za

Western Cape Education Department. (2017). Specialised support services: *Learning support*. Retrieved July 23, 2023, from https://wcedeportal.co.za/specialised-support-services

White, C. J., & Van Dyk, H. (2019). Theory and practice of the quintile ranking of schools in South Africa: A financial management perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, *39*(Supplement 1), s1-19. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39ns1a1820

Williams-McBean, C. T. (2019). The value of a qualitative pilot study in a multi-phase mixed methods research. *The Qualitative Report*, *24*(5), 1055-1064.

Willis, J. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Sage.

Wood, L. M., Sebar, B., & Vecchio, N. (2020). Application of rigour and credibility in qualitative document analysis: Lessons learnt from a case study. *The Qualitative Report*, *25*(2), 456-470. https://doi.org/10.46743/216037152020.4240

World Health Organization, (2022). *World health mental health report*: *Transforming health for all*. Retrieved Retrieved July 13, 2023 from https://www.who.int/publications

Appendix 1: Ethics clearance

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

60 YEARS of hope, action & knowledge

17 June 2020

Ms A Brown
Faculty of Education

Ethics Reference Number:	HS20/4/35
Project Title:	The enhancement of psychosocial support for foundation phase learners who experience psychosocial challenges at one no fee school in the Cape Metropole.
Approval Period:	17 June 2020 – 17 June 2023

I hereby certify that the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the above mentioned research project.

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

Please remember to submit a progress report by 30 November each year for the duration of the project.

The permission to conduct the study must be submitted to HSSREC for record keeping purposes.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

Ms Patricia Josias
Research Ethics Committee Officer
University of the Western Cape

Director: Research Development
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X 17
Bellville 7535
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 21 959 4111
Email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

NHREC Registration Number: HSSREC-130416-049

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE.

Appendix 2: Letter of permission from WCED to conduct research

Western Cape Government
Education

Directorate: Research

meshack.kanzi@westerncape.gov.za
Tel: +27 021 467 2350
Fax: 086 590 2282
Private Bag x9114, Cape Town, 8000
wced.wcape.gov.za

REFERENCE: 20210908-5689
ENQUIRIES: Mr M Kanzi

Ms Alzette Brown
23 Neethlingshof Crescent
Haasendal
Kuilsriver
7580

Dear Ms Alzette Brown,

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY FP LEARNERS AT ONE NO FEE SCHOOL IN THE CAPE METROPOLE.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **28 September 2021 till 29 April 2022.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Mr M Kanzi at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the list of schools as forwarded to the Western Cape Education Department.
10. The approval of your research request does not imply a promise of any data from the WCED. Should you require data, you will have to request it from the participating schools where it will be possible to secure parental consent.
11. Please note that POPIA prohibits the sharing of personal information without parental consent.
12. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Research Services.
13. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:

    The Director: Research Services
    Western Cape Education Department
    Private Bag X9114
    CAPE TOWN
    8000

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Meshack Kanzi
Directorate: Research
DATE: 28 September 2021

Appendix 3: Educator consent form for their participation

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX 3b: EDUCATOR CONSENT FORM FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION

I the undersigned give consent to participate in the research undertaken by Alzette Brown, a Masters student at the University of the Western Cape. I understand the information about the study provided in the covering letter and I have, of my own volition decided to participate in the study.

I have also been assured that all ethical practices as it pertains to research as outlined below will be upheld. As a participant in the study I hereby acknowledge that:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. She has also assured that all the information obtained from me as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.

2. I am prepared to participate in an audio recorded face-to face interview and (or) a focus group discussion and the completion of a questionnaire regarding the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at [redacted] Primary School.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.

4. I understand that all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information provided will be used strictly for research purposes.

Name in print:_____ Signature:_____

Date:_____

For further enquiries, you may contact the researcher or her supervisor through the contact details given below:

The Student: Alzette Brown

E-mail: Alzette.brown@gmail.com

Supervisor: Prof Trevor Moodley

Senior Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology

Faculty of Education,

University of the Western Cape

Email: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za

You could also contact the UWC HSSREC office at: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za or tel:021 -959 2948/49/88

16

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Appendix 4: Parent consent form for their participation

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

APPENDIX 4b: PARENT/GUARDIAN/ CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION

I, the undersigned give consent to participate in the research undertaken by Alzette Brown, a Masters student at the University of the Western Cape. I understand the information about the study provided in the covering letter and I have, of my own volition decided to participate in the study. I have also been assured that all ethical practices as it pertains to research as outlined below will be upheld. As a participant in the study I hereby acknowledge that:

1. The researcher has explained to me the purpose of this study. She has also assured that all the information obtained from me as part of the study will be used for research purposes only.

2. I am prepared to participate in an audio recorded face-to face focus group discussion and the completion of a questionnaire regarding the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at [redacted] Primary School.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage.

4. I understand that all participants in the study will remain anonymous and information provided will be used strictly for research purposes.

Name in print:_____ Signature:_____

Date:_____

For further enquiries, you may contact the researcher or his supervisor through the contact details given below:

The Student: Alzette Brown
E-mail: alzette.brown@gmail.com
Telephone number: [redacted]

Supervisor:
Prof Trevor Moodley
Senior Lecturer: Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education
University of the Western Cape
Email: tmoodley@uwc.ac.za

You could also contact the UWC HSSREC office at: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za or tel: 021 -959 2948/49/88

20

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule (focus group and individual) for Foundation Phase teachers, parents and SBST members

The enhancement of psychosocial support for FP learners who experience psychosocial challenges at one no fee school in the Cape Metropole

- Dear participants, before completing the questionnaire below it is important to understand the following concept:
- psychosocial refers to the psychological and social factors that influence mental health. Social influences such as peer pressure , parental support, cultural and religious background, socioeconomic status, and interpersonal relationships all help to shape personality and influence psychological makeup.
- Psychosocial challenges experienced by learners could include emotional, educational and behavioural problems

1. What types of psychosocial challenges do FP learners experience at the no fee school?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. What support is provided to address the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at the no fee school?

_____

_____

21

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Do you think the support provided is effective? If so, To what extent?

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. How can the psychosocial support given to FP learners at the no fee school be enhanced?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What can the relevant role-players such as the school community, teachers, parents, community leaders and the WCED do to enhance psychosocial support?

_____

_____

_____

Appendix 6: Questionnaire for parent participants

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

Appendix 6: Questionnaire for educators and parent participants

- Dear participants, before completing the questionnaire below it is important to understand the following concept:
- Psychosocial – includes aspects of the mind (how I feel about myself and how it affects my behavior) as well as social aspects (my culture, peer relations and the quality of peoples' lives). Psychosocial problems experience by leaners could include emotional, behavioural and educational problems

1. The psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at this school derives from:
   Please indicate your answer by an (X) in the table and you can choose more than one category

No		
1.	Parents	
2.	Community	
3.	School	

2. Explain your choice(s) that you made in Question 1.

.....
.....
.....

3. What are the psychosocial challenges experienced by FP learners at this school?

_____

_____

_____

4. Who provides the psychosocial support at school?

   Please indicate your answer by an (X) in the table and you can choose more than one category

No		

23

FROM HOPE TO ACTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE

1.	Class Educators	
2.	Learner support Educator(s)	
3.	School psychologist	

5. How often is the psychosocial support offered to the FP learners in need?

No		
1.	X1 Weekly 30 minutes session	
2.	X2 Weekly 30 minutes sessions	
3.	X1 30 minute session a month	

6. How effective is the psychosocial support being offered to FP learners at your school? Please explain

.....

.....

.....

7. How can psychosocial support for FP learners at the school be enhanced? Please explain:

.....

.....

Thank you

Appendix 7: Excerpt of transcript

Audio recording- interview – SBST representative 24/03/2022

Researcher: What type of challenges do the FP learners experience at your school?

SBST: There are various psychosocial issues that our learners deal with such as gansterism, violence at home, bullying at school as well is at home, drug abuse, alcohol abuse also poverty that's one issue that also stands out in our school and abuse in terms of emotional abuse.

Researcher: How do you identify the challenges that these children are faced with on a daily basis?

SBST: We actually have a teacher that assist us in that regard, So if we as teachers pick up that there is a problem then what we do is we send the child, if the child is not comfortable talking to us and we don't have the right to ask the child any questions and if the child is not comfortable talking to us we refer the child to that teacher and if the child opens up to that teacher and then from there we see how we can help that child especially in terms of poverty, we have a feeding scheme programme, which can help the child but I mean that's like nothing compared to what our learners are facing on a regular basis. Also what we have is a feeding programme that runs throughout the school holidays as well.

Researcher: Okay is that for parents as well or just for the learners?

SBST: At first it was for the parents and learners so basically it was for the community but at this stage it has stopped. So it's only for learners.

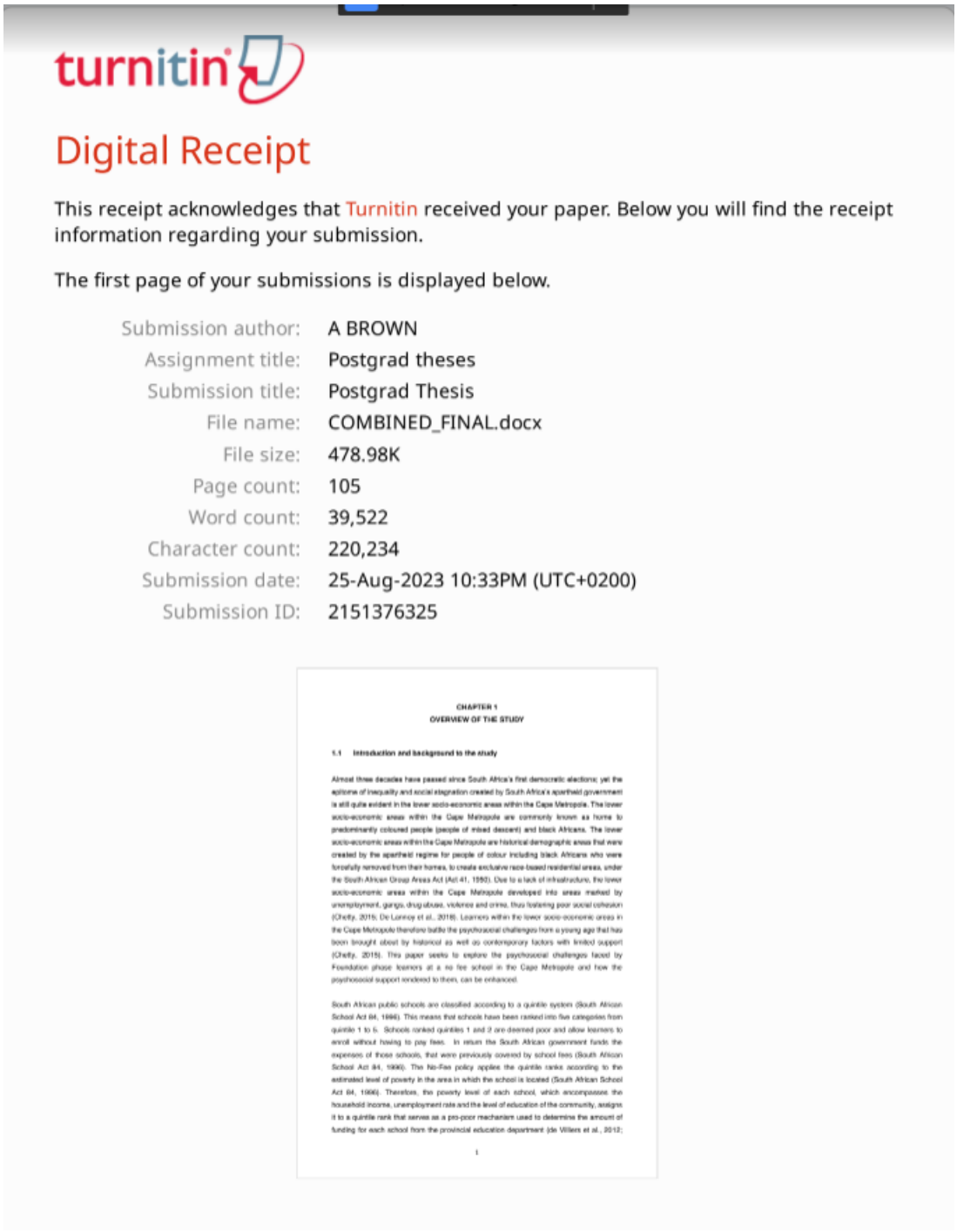
Researcher: The teacher whom you refer the learners whom you have identified, is that your LSE?

SBST: She's not an educator, she is from the department, she is a facilitator at school, but after her we refer the matter to our LSE, depending on the circumstances. If we need to fill in a form we will escalate straight to the social worker.

Researcher: Besides the feeding scheme, what other support is provided to the learners who experience psychosocial issues at school?

SBST: Well, we do have counseling, but we have to apply for that. There isn't someone at school that offers counseling.

Appendix 8: Turnitin Certificate



turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	A BROWN
Assignment title:	Postgrad theses
Submission title:	Postgrad Thesis
File name:	COMBINED_FINAL.docx
File size:	478.98K
Page count:	105
Word count:	39,522
Character count:	220,234
Submission date:	25-Aug-2023 10:33PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	2151376325

CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

Almost three decades have passed since South Africa's first democratic elections; yet the epitome of inequality and social stagnation created by South Africa's apartheid government is still quite evident in the lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole. The lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole are commonly known as home to predominantly coloured people (people of mixed descent) and black Africans. The lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole are historical demographic areas that were created by the apartheid regime for people of colour including black Africans who were forcefully removed from their homes, to create exclusive race-based residential areas, under the South African Group Areas Act (Act 41, 1950). Due to a lack of infrastructure, the lower socio-economic areas within the Cape Metropole developed into areas marked by unemployment, gangs, drug abuse, violence and crime, thus fostering poor social cohesion (Chetty, 2015; De Lannoy et al., 2018). Learners within the lower socio-economic areas in the Cape Metropole therefore battle the psychosocial challenges from a young age that has been brought about by historical as well as contemporary factors with limited support (Chetty, 2015). This paper seeks to explore the psychosocial challenges faced by Foundation phase learners at a no fee school in the Cape Metropole and how the psychosocial support rendered to them, can be enhanced.

South African public schools are classified according to a quintile system (South African School Act 84, 1996). This means that schools have been ranked into five categories from quintile 1 to 5. Schools ranked quintiles 1 and 2 are deemed poor and allow learners to enroll without having to pay fees. In return the South African government funds the expenses of those schools, that were previously covered by school fees (South African School Act 84, 1996). The No-Fee policy applies the quintile ranks according to the estimated level of poverty in the area in which the school is located (South African School Act 84, 1996). Therefore, the poverty level of each school, which encompasses the household income, unemployment rate and the level of education of the community, assigns it to a quintile rank that serves as a pro-poor mechanism used to determine the amount of funding for each school from the provincial education department (de Villiers et al., 2012;

1

Appendix 9: Turnitin Similarity Index

Turnitin Originality Report

Postgrad Thesis by A BROWN

From Postgrad theses (Postgraduate theses)

- Processed on 27-Aug-2023 02:39 SAST
- ID: 2151376325
- Word Count: 39522

Similarity Index
5%
Similarity by Source

Internet Sources:
5%
Publications:
2%
Student Papers:
1%

sources:

1 1% match ()
Mothamaha, Lomile Victorian. "The lived experiences of educators who provide psychosocial care and support in a disadvantaged South African primary school", 2021

2 1% match ()
Daniels, Karin Elizabeth. "Health promotion : the design of a School Health Index Score Card to assess psychosocial health and well-being in early childhood development at primary schools", 'University of the Western Cape Library Service', 2016

3 1% match ()
Moolla, Nadeen. "The role of school psychologists in school development in South Africa: the challenge of intersectoral collaboration", 'University of the Western Cape Library Service', 2011

4 1% match (Internet from 10-Jul-2020)
https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/CSTL%20Handbook.pdf?ver=2019-06-18-134012-183

5 1% match (Internet from 24-Aug-2022)
https://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=2bB7EaySbcw%3D&mid=&portalid=0&tabid=617

6 1% match (Internet from 09-Aug-2022)
http://etd.uwc.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11394/8791/agulhas_m_edu_2021.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1