CHAPTER 4: LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has raised many important and worthwhile issues, but has a number of shortcomings as well.

4.1. Limitations

A serious limitation pertains to the sample. The sample was recruited from one school in one particular area, meaning that the participants were all from one socio-economic class. This sample is therefore not representative of all South African adolescents and the findings from this study cannot be generalised to all South African adolescents.

The sample also comprised volunteers. Volunteers bring their own bias, as they differ from other individuals in many ways. Generalisation of these results therefore needs to be made with caution.

Due to the sample being drawn from one socio-economic group, with similar cultural practices, there was no exploration of cultural diversity and the impact that this has on suicide ideation. It is acknowledged that South Africa is a culturally diverse society and any study, which attempts to understand South African adolescents, would benefit from the inclusion of a cultural diverse sample.

It is also acknowledged that a number of other variables could impact on adolescent suicide ideation levels, such as culture, personality, socio-economic status, family dynamics and depression. The variable of depression is an important one as individuals who are depressed are more likely to have thoughts pertaining to suicide
than those who are not. Depression has also been linked to the manner in which males and females cope in stressful situations (Petersen et al, 1991). Depression is therefore an important variable to consider and it can bring about changes in levels of suicide ideation and coping strategy. The possible influence of these confounding variables cannot be determined by this study and therefore place some limitation on the findings of the study.

4.2. Recommendations

This study has raised the important issue of being able to determine possible levels of suicide ideation in adolescents from the coping strategies they exhibit. Future studies should attempt to replicate these findings in more representative samples, using participants from other socio-economic areas and comparing urban and rural areas.

Understanding functional coping strategies and their relationship with positive ideation, would be beneficial in designing intervention programs, whereby adolescents who are at risk of suicide attempt can be taught how to cope with problems in a functional manner and thereby reduce negative ideation and possible suicide attempt. Future research on such intervention programs, as a protection factor, would be useful.

More research needs to be carried out in South Africa, in order to understand further the manner in which adolescents cope and how these coping strategies relate to suicide ideation, in order to help combat the rise in teenage suicide.
While it is acknowledged that this study is limited in terms of its sample comprising one sector of the South African adolescent population, it contributes to the understanding of adolescent coping strategies and their relationship with levels of suicide ideation. It also highlights the gaps in the suicide prevention program at hand, which may be considered when developing further suicide prevention programs.