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Attachment and Social competence: How Sedibeng West township schools can be secure bases for all learners

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Title of PhD Thesis

ATTACHMENT AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE: HOW SEDIBENG WEST TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS CAN BE SECURE BASES FOR ALL LEARNERS

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A thesis submitted for the fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education in the Wits School of Education, Faculty of Humanities, at the University of Witwatersrand

December 2024

Declaration

I, Sibanyoni Morefaith Naledi, do declare that this PhD thesis is my original work and that it has not submitted for the award of a degree at any University.

Signed: *FaithM*

Supervisor's signature: 

Date: **December 2024**

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my colleagues in township schools, as well as to all school leaders and educational stakeholders. While working in the public sector presents its own set of distinctive difficulties, township schools pose even greater hurdles. Undoubtedly, township schools require additional resources, and learners are confronted with numerous obstacles stemming from poverty and unemployment in their communities, which they bring with them to school. The objective of this study was to also demonstrate the necessity for doubling the effort, financial investment, expertise, and resources allocated to township schools, with the aim of gaining the support and recognition of all stakeholders.

I have observed that enthusiastic young professionals, similar to myself, often lose their motivation over time due to the formidable nature of township schools and the insufficient assistance they receive. Increasingly, township schools have become arenas for political conflicts. I aspire to witness the emergence of a transformed South Africa, where the needs and interests of all parties involved, including learners, are adequately addressed. As outlined in this study, the primary issue that needs to be tackled in township schools is the urgent requirement for intervention and assistance for learners who originate from homes with insecure attachments. This study uncovered that most learners in township schools experience suffocation and need help to develop, hindering their preparation for the real world socially. Furthermore, if they fail to do so, it also results in their inability to escape the township and its systems to improve their life. Similarly, I would want to praise the diligent efforts made by the majority of township schools to ensure that all their learners are receiving a satisfactory education while facing numerous ongoing obstacles. I anticipate that this study findings will also ignite a curiosity to further explore the issue, as well as motivate several school leaders and educators to persist in their commendable efforts. In addition, I would like to dedicate this PhD thesis to my deceased father. His legacy endures.

Acknowledgements

It's been three years since the beginning of this PhD journey. This journey has made me want to give up so many times that I can't even count them. "What's the point?" kept going through my mind, but the most interesting aspect is that each time it did, I found more reasons to keep going. Something that was just a dream is now reality.

First and foremost, I would like to give thanks to my Father and my God, who has carried me and given me the chance to reach this point. Praise, magnificence, and reverence be given to God. He has the capacity to surpass our expectations and thoughts to an extraordinary degree, in accordance with the force that is active within us. Let honour be given to him repeatedly in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, without end. In order to successfully undertake this PhD study, one must possess mental and physical fortitude, resilience, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding. I am thankful that I have been endowed with all of these qualities through my faith in Christ. Undoubtedly, the Lord is by my side. I perceive it and I possess knowledge of it. I embarked on this journey in April 2021, filled with excitement upon registration. However, a few months later, I was caught in a car accident, which subsequently led to an overwhelming state of sadness. I distinctly recall experiencing a complete loss of optimism, resulting in a lack of anticipation for any future activities. Throughout that challenging period, my father served as a resilient pillar of support for me, motivating me to regain a sense of optimism. In June 2021, I began writing, only to tragically lose him the following month. Everything in my world came to a complete halt. I felt mentally constrained and was filled with incredulity. I was indifferent to the prospect of death and everything seemed incomprehensible. I have never experienced such intense fear before. The prospect of living in this world without a father is incomprehensible to me. I felt unsafe, and I still don't. My father served as my refuge and my initial affection. Consistently displaying kindness.

I found new strength and more people who helped me with my destiny that I'd like to thank. I'm very thankful for my loving husband, Christian Sibanyoni. I met him during a time of difficulty, and he helped me see that God still had a plan for my life. He was so lively at the time, and he still is and that made me remember my goals, and getting my PhD was one of them. Since then, he's been on my side. His help is unmatched, and it makes me think of my late dad all the time. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my family, my mom Mercy Mahlangu and sisters, Makabongwe and Mazwamahle for their unwavering love and support. I can always

count on them and I cannot imagine my life without them. I love them deeply and life is worth living with them.

I would also like to acknowledge my dearest friends, Boitumelo Mokwena and Fortunate Cindi for walking this journey with me. Boitumelo in particular is my best friend and has always supported me since my Honours degree. Her wisdom and understand has helped me in my shortfalls. Fortunate is my fellow PhD colleague and this journey was not so lonely with her. In addition, we have always celebrated each other throughout the years. I am so grateful to have travelled this journey with her. I would also like to acknowledge my two other friends Tsholofelo Matabane, and Phumelele Ngeleka for their constant check-ups and love throughout this journey.

This journey wouldn't be possible without my supervisor, Dr Peter Aloka. I could write a whole thesis but I am honoured to have been supervised by him. Dr Aloka has been one committed supervisor I have ever had. His commitment exceeded mine, yet it was my PhD study. He stretched me so much that I thought I was going to explode. However, he showed me that I am strong, very capable and have all it takes to finish my PhD study on time. I enjoyed working with him despite my thousand challenges and excuses. He has been my consistent destiny helper and I commend him.

Finally, I want to thank all the principals and deputy principals who let me into their schools, teachers and learners who took part in the study. Without them, I would not have been able to finish my thesis. Their help and useful comments made this study more in-depth, and talking about different points of view, problems, and experiences made the results of this study better. I learned a lot from seeing things through their perspectives and insights. I'd also like to thank the National Research Fund for funding this study and the Gauteng Department of Education for letting me do my research in the Sedibeng West District. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my pastors, whom I love so dearly, Ps Martin Mgiba and Dr Sphe Mgiba for their endless prayers and support. They already call me 'Dr' so I knew in my heart that one way or the other I had to finish.

Abstract

Ensuring secure and safe environments is crucial for fostering children's emotional growth, preparing them to become prosocial adults and future leaders. Crucially, when children are in danger, they will naturally seek closeness to their primary caregiver to obtain both comfort and care. Children who remain close to their attachment figures are more likely to receive comfort and protection, and as a result, have a higher chance of surviving into adulthood. Attachment relationships are essential because they provide a stable basis for emotional regulation. This allows infants and children to learn how to manage their emotions by receiving attentive and supportive care from their caregivers. Studies suggest that most learners in township schools in South Africa come from insecure attachment backgrounds, which can result in challenging relationships with family members. However, these learners from insecure backgrounds need more skills and developmental experiences to form positive and satisfying relationships with their peers, hindering their social competence.

The current study aimed to investigate attachment and social competence among learners in Sedibeng West Township schools, Gauteng. One of the study's objective was to determine the types of parent-child attachments exhibited by grade 10 learners in township schools and investigate the factors that contribute to secure and insecure attachment styles. The study was informed by two theories: the Attachment Theory, and the Ecological Systems Theory and the research was based on the interpretivism paradigm, and multiple case study research design was utilized. The sampling frame comprised 6 teachers, 18 grade 10 learners, and 3 deputy principals in 3 selected secondary schools in the Sedibeng West district. The research participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique and data collection from all participants was conducted using semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample strategy was used to select grade 10 learners and the participants were chosen based on their attachment histories and their display of social and antisocial behaviour in schools. Deputy principals were chosen to gather information on how schools provide assistance to learners with secure and insecure attachment. The criteria for selecting teachers required a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience and the choice of teachers was based on the belief that Life-Orientation teachers have a significant impact on the overall development of learners. The amalgamation of these participants, possessing extensive information, experiences, and expertise, made a valuable contribution to the research. The findings revealed that learners exhibited both secure

and insecure attachment types in their home environments and that secure parent-child attachment patterns were influenced by characteristics such as emotional availability within the home, parental support and motivation, parental supply and supervision, and family protection. The findings led to a development of a specialized model tailored for township secondary schools.

Key words: *Attachment, Grade 10 learners, Social competence, Psychological support, social support, Township schools, Secure base, Adolescents.*

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List of Abbreviations & Acronyms

CAPS: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement

EQ: Emotional Intelligence

SASA: South African Schools Act

SCS: Social competence skills

SEL: Social and Emotional Learning

SQ: Social Quotients

IQ: Intelligence Quotient

SGB: School Governing Body

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Attachment is a crucial notion in the progression of children, and it aids in studying the growth of persons from infancy to adulthood. Extensive research spanning several decades has demonstrated a strong correlation between attachment security and a wide range of long-term child outcomes, such as academic achievement and social competence. Simultaneously, attachment can have an impact on children's academic performance and social skills in school. Attachment is a significant developmental milestone in a child's life and continues to be an important issue throughout their entire lifespan (Duchesne & Larose, 2007). The term attachment refers to the tendency of humans to develop intense emotional connections with individuals upon whom they depend for safety, comfort, and support from early stages of life (Tomlinson & Murray, 2010). In this study, the term "attachment caregivers" refers to parents/guardians and instructors who provide care for learners, whether it be at home or at school. Attachment relationships in children are distinguished by particular behaviours, such as displaying a preference for or seeking comfort from the attachment figure when feeling frightened or unhappy, and utilizing the attachment figure as a solid foundation while exploring their surroundings.

Being attached to someone refers to having a strong inclination to seek closeness and interaction with a particular someone, especially when experiencing fear, fatigue, or illness (Bowlby, 1969/1982: 371). Moreover, attachment is a person's connection with their social network and the emotional bond they may have with one or more important individuals who are perceived as more powerful or knowledgeable. These individuals can provide protection from harm and a secure place to explore the surroundings, which contributes to personal development in daily life (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). This study specifically examined the third aspect of Shulman's (1987) research, which is the understanding of learners and the process of learning. This part has been somewhat neglected throughout the years, in contrast to the other two components, namely (1) content knowledge and (2) general and specific pedagogical knowledge. Understanding learners and the learning process involves a deep understanding of diagnosing human learning, motivation, and child development. According to Nezhad and Vahedi (2011), it is crucial to train instructors to become proficient in identifying and analysing learners and

their learning processes. This is a necessary component in improving teacher education and ongoing professional growth.

Tuner (2011) asserts that attachment has the potential to enhance both micro and macro social work practice. Thus, practitioners have the ability to create parenting programs or raise awareness within the community. These initiatives can equip parents with effective bonding practices that have the potential to enhance their children's growth and emotional security. Education and empowerment can equip schools with the essential resources to implement transformative changes that have a beneficial impact on learners' behaviour and enhance the overall school environment.. Recognizing the significance of secure attachments is a vital element, since it has an impact on behaviour, cognitive abilities, social interactions, and emotional growth, either in a favourable or negative manner (Ogbomoso, 2017). The attachment dimensions considered in this study include security, apprehension about losing a secure external support system, the capacity for mentalizing, unresolved familial trauma, a positive and negative self-perception, and a positive and negative perception of others (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020). Bergin and Bergin (2009) argue that attachment serves two important functions in the classroom. Firstly, it creates a sense of security, allowing children to freely explore their surroundings. Secondly, while all children have a natural desire for security, attachment helps them find a balance between this need and their innate drive to explore their environment. Furthermore, attachment serves as the foundation for the socialization of children. This means that when children and adults come together and interact in a positive manner, children tend to imitate and internalize the behaviour and values of the adults (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

The notion of attachment is crucial in the development of humans, and its theory has been recognized and validated as a diagnostic tool for persons of all ages, from infancy to adulthood. Attachment explores the initial emotional connections between children and their caregivers, which have a significant and lasting impact on their lives. These early bonds can influence various aspects of their decision-making, including their choice of career, religious beliefs, and future marital decisions (Bretherton, 1992). This study presented many categories of attachment styles, demonstrating how attachment develops over time and how children's positive and bad experiences impact them psychologically. The initial classification or kind is referred to as secure attachment, which was the intended representation or ultimate objective of this study. Secure attachment refers to the emotional bond that children have with their caregivers, where they depend on their caregivers to display signs of distress when separated and happiness when reunited. Despite the child's distress, they have confidence that the caregiver will come back.

Securely linked youngsters, when experiencing fear, feel at ease seeking comfort and reassurance from their caregivers. These children mature into individuals who possess self-assurance and self-reliance. An attentive caregiver pays close attention to the child's cues, accurately interprets those cues, comprehends the child's point of view, and immediately and effectively responds to the child's needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Therefore, children experience insecure attachment when they do not have a proper representation. Secure connection establishes a stable foundation for the kid, enabling them to engage in exploration, play, and other social activities (Sterkenburg, van Rensburg & van Deventer, 2011).

The insecure attachments patterns can be categorized as disorganized, ambivalent, and avoidant attachment. Children with disorganized attachment exhibit a perplexing combination of behaviors, appearing bewildered, distressed, or perplexed. In such instances, parents might function as both a source of solace and anxiety, resulting in disordered conduct. These children develop lower self-confidence as they mature. This dimension pertains to worry and measures the extent to which an individual is concerned that a person they are attached to will not be accessible or sufficiently responsive during times of necessity (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

The ambivalent attachment pertains to youngsters who experience significant discomfort when a parent departs. The ambivalent attachment type is linked to parents or guardians who are inaccessible. Due to the lack of stable parental availability, these children are unable to rely on their primary caregiver for support when they require it. Lastly, individuals with an avoidant attachment style tend to exhibit indifference towards both their parents or caregivers and strangers, displaying no discernible preference between them. The development of this attachment type may be attributed to caregivers who have exhibited abusive or negligent behaviors (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998). Moreover, individuals with avoidant attachment tend to exhibit avoidance behavior towards their parents or caregivers, displaying no discernible preference between a caregiver and a stranger. The avoidant attachment style may arise as a consequence of caregivers who have been abusive or neglectful. Children who get punishment for depending on a caregiver will develop a tendency to refrain from seeking assistance in subsequent situations. The component of avoidance refers to the level at which the kid lacks faith in the caregiver's intentions and makes efforts to retain independence and emotional detachment from them (Mikulincer, Shaver, Sapir-Lavid & Avihou-Kanza, 2009).

Attachment styles seem to be manifestations of individuals' interpersonal pasts. When individuals perceive support and caring from others, they are more inclined to express a sense of security in their interactions (La Guardia et al., 2000). Furthermore, individuals who lack support and understanding from others often experience heightened feelings of uneasiness (Chopik, Edelstein &Fraley, 2013). Typically, those who express feelings of security often recall having more favourable caregiving experiences during their childhood and having healthier interactions with their peers (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2000).

Pace, Cacioppo, and Schimmenti's (2012) argues that insecurity or insecure attachment can lead to the development of dismissive children who possess a pessimistic perception of both themselves and others. Furthermore, children that come from insecure attachment settings typically exhibit reduced sociability as they mature and develop a strong reliance on others rather than themselves. This phenomenon leads to the development of persons who experience dread and possess a pessimistic perception of themselves and others. Consequently, they tend to avoid forming emotional connections with others, as they perceive themselves as inadequate and believe that they do not require any close relationships (Yahya, et al., 2017). Furthermore, Tomlinson and Murray (2010) argue that children strive to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between their desire for closeness and their need to explore their surroundings. Children that are insecure do not undergo typical social and emotional development due to the unfavourable circumstances they encounter (Ainsworth, 1970).

As stated in the Training for Township Renewal Initiative (2007), the unfavourable conditions encompass high unemployment, poor household incomes, and poverty. These factors might potentially result in domestic abuse, substance misuse, criminality, and early school dropout. If the family environment lacks constructive and supportive conditions, it is normal to turn to the school as the next available resource. Thus, schools have a unique and influential impact on the lives of learners. Research indicates that a school environment that is supportive and safe might mitigate the negative impact of risk factors by offering protective elements and fostering optimal development for learners (Mampane, 2011). Learners at township schools are subjected to violence, criminality, and the socioeconomic challenges of poverty and parental unemployment throughout their educational journey. Hence, the significance of the township secondary school in aiding less resilient pupils is a subject of great importance (Mampane, 2011).

Township sites in South Africa were initially established as racially segregated, affordable housing projects for black laborers. Presently, the existence of townships in South Africa continues to be marked by numerous difficulties that are directly linked to the contemporary era. The winds of change are partially caused by the growing economy, which is putting increased pressure on township environments due to more lenient inflow control regulations. This, in turn, leads to the formation of informal dwelling communities (Mampane, 2010). Informal housing settlements impose a strain on under-resourced township environments and schools due to their spontaneous and unregulated nature, lacking any pre-existing infrastructure. This compels townships to distribute the resources that are accessible within their surroundings. The aforementioned conditions have an impact on the learner's education and, on a broader scale, their behavior in classrooms that are too populated (Mampane 2010). According to Harber (2001), schools in South Africa have seen the impact of violence, leading to the upbringing of many children in circumstances lacking security. According to Harber (2001), South African children experience violence in their surroundings during their development, which has a detrimental impact on their emotional and social growth, leading them to rely on criminal activities and become involved in gangs.

This study was also founded upon the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Life Orientation that focuses on developing the skills, information, and values necessary for the personal, social, intellectual, emotional, and physical growth of learners. This school subject leads and prepares learners for life, its possibilities, and educates them for meaningful and effective living in a dynamic and evolving society. It fosters self-motivation and instructs learners in the use of goal planning, problem-solving, and decision-making processes, so preparing them for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and developing their 21st Century abilities. These help to promote personal development as part of an endeavour to establish a democratic society and enhance the overall quality of life. The Department of Basic Education (2011) states that learners are given guidance to reach their maximum capabilities and are given chances to make well-informed decisions about their personal and environmental health, educational prospects, and future vocations. In addition, Life Orientation includes a 10% component of physical activity, which is advantageous in this context since it allows teachers to assess learners' interactive and social abilities. Furthermore, the Life Orientation learning area provides learners with essential life skills, such as psychosocial and interpersonal skills, to empower them in making well-informed decisions, self-management, and improved

communication. The objective is to exert a good impact on learners and their surroundings, enabling them to live a fruitful and efficient life (Mampane 2010).

This study focused on grade 10 learners who are in the middle-adolescent phase of development. The term "tenth grade" denotes the third year of formal education in South Africa's high school or secondary school system. Typically, individuals in this phase of schooling, as stated by the Department of Basic schooling in 2011, are adolescents aged 15-17. These learners in their middle-adolescent stage are undergoing a transition from childhood to adulthood and progressing from an intermediate phase to a senior phase of their education within a school setting. The school, which prioritizes the holistic development of its learners, seeks to foster their emotional, physical, social, and psychological well-being, hence fostering healthy growth (Mampane, 2010). This study focused on the emotional and social growth of learners with insecure attachment patterns from township schools. Prevalent in schools, inappropriate attachments can result in social ineptitude and anxiety problems. If not addressed, these issues can have a range of detrimental consequences. Tomlinson and Murray's (2010) study revealed that parental sensitivity tends to be lower when families face socioeconomic difficulty and mental health issues. Given this understanding, it is valuable to pursue this study as Bretherton (1992) argued that when there is a lack of familial security, the individual is hindered by the absence of a secure foundation. This implies that schools can strive to provide a secure attachment and a safe environment to bridge the gap and fulfil the needs of all learners.

This study focused on grade 10 learners in township schools in the Sedibeng area of South Africa. According to Sekhampu and Niyimbanira (2013), most parents in Sedibeng West lack supportiveness and sensitivity towards their children's education, as well as the ability to aid them with high school material and homework. In terms of the job status of the respondents, 58.1% were unemployed. The average lowest monthly spending per household was R190, while the average total monthly expenditure was R1658. Consequently, this prompted inquiries on the diverse attachment backgrounds of learners from the specified region. The existing literature on social competencies presents inconsistent findings, with few material specifically pertaining to the South African setting. This study aimed to address this research vacuum. Recent research conducted in South Africa has revealed that attachment types exert a substantial influence on several elements of learners' life, both within and outside of the school environment. Zaidman-Mograbi et al., (2020) conducted a study in South Africa that highlighted the need of taking local settings into account when examining attachment and maternal sensitivity. Similarly, a study conducted by Thandiswa et al., (2022) in South Africa

found a substantial positive link between love types and attachment behavior. In a study conducted in South Africa, Ebere et al., (2022) proposed that there is a positive correlation between parent-child attachment and both self-efficacy and social skills. A recent study conducted by Schuitmaker et al., (2023) in South Africa emphasized the significance of taking into account the potential influence of insecure attachment styles on post-traumatic growth. This understanding could be valuable in guiding the treatment of individuals who have experienced trauma. Although there have been new efforts to study attachment, there is a lack of literature on social competence and how schools might serve as solid grounds for learners with unfavourable attachments. The objective of this study was to investigate attachment and social competence, and how it may be used to develop a framework to make schools to be secure bases for learners. The research was based on the interpretivism paradigm, and multiple case study research design was utilized. The sampling frame comprised of 6 teachers, 18 grade 10 learners, and 3 deputy principals from 3 secondary schools in the Sedibeng West district. The research participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique and the data obtained from interviews was analysed thematically.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Interacting with attachment figures who are present when needed, and who are attentive and receptive to requests for closeness, enables the attachment system to work at its best. This promotes a strong sense of inner security and helps learners develop social skills and self-assurance (Bretherton, 1992). Thus, if a guardian is not present, it is imperative for a child to have a caregiver at school who can assume a role like that of a comforting parent. This caregiver should be attentive, accessible, and capable of dedicating time to the child. Nevertheless, it has been previously stated that most children in township environments are raised in dysfunctional communities, child-headed households, or by abusive parents. Additionally, children who lack a primary caregiver, such as those raised in orphanages or by strangers, may struggle to develop the necessary trust required to form attachments (Tomlinson & Murray, 2010). This situation poses a risk to the emotional and social development of learners from unstable attachment backgrounds in township schools. Typically, this occurs predominantly in township locations. According to Bretherton's (1992) research, insecure attachment representations have an impact on children's internal experiences and social adjustment, including their interactions with parents, teachers, and peers. Due to the prevalence of learners from insecure attachment

backgrounds in township schools in South Africa, they are prone to encountering challenging relationships with their family members. Additionally, they lack the necessary skills and developmental experiences to establish positive and satisfying relationships with their peers, which hinders their social competence (Kennedy, 2008). These learners have an insufficient foundation for emotional and social exploration, making it more difficult for them to develop an independent sense of self and handle peer pressure. Furthermore, individuals who have experienced insecure attachment in their early years may develop a sense of emptiness within themselves and engage in detrimental behaviors with their peers, such as engaging in risky sexual activities, using illegal substances, participating in gang-related activities, and committing crimes. These behaviors, which are actually distressing to them, can also lead to academic failure (Kennedy, 2008).

Recent studies conducted in South Africa, such as Zaidman-Mograbi et al., (2020), Thandiswa et al. (2022), Ebere et al., (2022), and Schuitmaker et al., (2023), all emphasize the significance of examining the influence of insecure attachment styles on post-traumatic growth. However, there is dearth of literature in South Africa about attachment, social competence, and the potential for schools to serve as secure bases for learners who have experienced unfavorable attachments. Therefore, this doctoral thesis addressed a significant research deficiency in the existing body of literature. Consequently, schools can offer an alternative environment to provide assistance for learners with insecure attachment backgrounds. Therefore, the study aimed to investigate attachment and social competence, and how it can be used to develop a framework to make schools to be secure bases for learners.

1.3 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Schools serve multiple functions, including the cultivation of a sense of belonging, selfhood, and identity among learners and educators (Hendricks, 2012). Consequently, schools should provide a safe environment where learners get not only high-quality education but also emotional and social support. Hence, the establishment of secure and protected environments is crucial for the emotional maturation of children, as it facilitates their transformation into socially responsible individuals and future leaders. Secondary socialization occurs within educational institutions, when learners who have experienced insecure attachment can establish relationships with teachers, who serve as their secondary caregivers. Crucially, studies indicate that when children are in danger, they instinctively want closeness to their main caregiver in

order to obtain both solace and attention. Previous research has shown that children who stay close to a caregiver are more likely to receive emotional support and physical safety, increasing their chances of reaching secondary education and maturity (Mikulincer, Shaver, Sapir-Lavid, & Avihou-Kanza, 2009).

The primary objective of this study was to expedite the development of secure attachment and social competence, as well as foster a secure reliance in individuals who have previously experienced insecure attachments. This would better prepare them for unknown settings and maturity. Primarily, insecure attachments can be remedied through forming new relationships or attachments, and school personnel can have a crucial impact on this process by providing learners with novel experiences (Kennedy, 2008). There is no definitive solution that enables us to predict which learner will develop secure attachment patterns and which will develop insecure attachment patterns. However, a key focus of this ongoing research is to determine the components that are significant in the formation of attachment types. The attachment pattern established during infancy, whether it is secure or insecure, can significantly influence various aspects of personality development, such as sociability, emotional tendencies, curiosity, self-esteem, independence, cooperation, and trust (Thompson, 1999).

Based on the literature evaluation, the study has identified various areas where further research was needed. The evaluated literature focused on children in pre-schools and elementary schools. This study addressed a research vacuum by include middle-adolescent learners. There has been a scarcity of study conducted on middle adolescents. Furthermore, most of the research that were analysed focused on infants and children in a generic sense. However, this study specifically examined learners in township schools. Furthermore, most of the research examined were exclusively experimental and lacked detailed qualitative information. In contrast, this study specifically concentrated on the participants' emotions, encounters, and perspectives, hence enhancing the comprehensiveness of the results. Ubha and Cahill (2014) argue that it is crucial to seize opportunities to enhance children's chances of developing important adult relationships. This is particularly important for children who have experienced insecure attachment in their early lives, where they may have lacked love, sensitivity, and comfort. Implementing this approach could mitigate the adverse consequences of previous insecure attachments, thereby fostering children's self-esteem, assurance, adaptability, and general socio-emotional welfare (Ubha & Cahill, 2014).

This study is important because its findings could help schools develop programs that create secure learning environments for learners with unstable attachment backgrounds, particularly in township schools. This knowledge could also be advantageous for educational policy because it can enhance the understanding of learners and how all learners can be supported instead of categorized in schools. The findings of the present study are significant as they have the potential to provide valuable material to the life-orientation curriculum in schools, specifically pertaining to the areas of goal-setting and decision-making. This study may offer valuable insights to stakeholders regarding strategies for promoting pro-social behaviour among learners in their interactions with others. This can be accomplished before selecting a topic in Grade 9. Significantly, the findings of this research have resulted in the creation of a 9-stage psycho-social support model, which serves as an intervention for learners who come from unstable backgrounds.

1.4 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to explore attachments styles and factors contributing to insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng West township schools, Gauteng, South Africa. The study also sought to examine the social competences of grade 10 learners from insecure parent-child attachments and finally, the extent to which existing teacher training programmes in schools support secure attachment.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of the study were:

(i) To establish the forms of parent-child attachments possessed by grade 10 learners in township schools.

(ii) To explore factors contributing to secure and insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in township schools.

(iii) To explore how social competences of grade 10 learners of insecure and secure parent-child attachments.

(iv) To establish how schools could be secure bases for learners

(v) To develop a framework/s that can assist teachers to make schools a secure base for learners from insecure attachment backgrounds.

1.6 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

The main research question of the study was stated as follows:

> *Which attachments styles are possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools, in South Africa? What factors contributing to secure and insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners?*

SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study was guided by the following research questions:

(i) Which forms of attachments styles are possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng West township schools?

(ii) What are the factors contributing to insecure and secure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng wet township schools?

(iii) What are the social competences of grade 10 learners from insecure and secure parent-child attachments?

(iv) How could schools could be secure bases for learners in insecure attachments?

(v) Which framework/s could assist teachers to make schools a secure base for learners from insecure attachment backgrounds?

1.7 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts have been defined as used in the study:

Parent-child attachment: The parent-child attachment is deemed as a kind of deep, enduring, intimate, and stable emotional connection that forms in the process of interaction between individuals and their parents (Ramsdal et al., 2015). In the present study, this refers to the kind of emotional connection that grade 10 learners have with their parents/guardians from home.

Social Competence: This refers to getting along well with others, being able to form and maintain close relationships, and responding in adaptive ways in social settings. Given the complexity of social interactions, social competence is the product of a wide range of cognitive abilities, emotional processes, behavioural skills, social awareness, and personal and cultural values related to interpersonal relationships (Orpinus, 2010). In the present

study, this refers to how learners view themselves on their interrelationships, solve problems and care for others.

Public Schools: The South African Schools Act (1996) refer to "an ordinary public school, a public school for learners with special education needs or a public school that provides education with a specialised focus on talent, including sport, performing arts or creative arts." (SASA, 1996, p 21). In the present study, this refers to the schools that receive capitation, and teachers employed and paid by the national government of South Africa.

Emotional Development: Refers to the ability to recognize, express, and manage feelings at different stages of life and to have empathy for the feelings of others. (Thompson, 1991). In the present study, this refers to how learners use and understand their emotions.

Middle-Adolescent: Refers to the developmental stage of middle-adolescence (period between 14 to 16 years), which is a stage that requires a to search for their identity (Carr-Gregg & Shale 2002:34; Gillis 1996:71). In the present study, this refers to the learners between the ages of 14-15 years.

Township: Refers to an underdeveloped urban living areas that, under Apartheid, were reserved for non-whites and were usually built on the periphery of towns and cities (Wikipedia n.d). A residential area for blacks, which Bremmer (2000:186) refers to as a 'segregated ghetto'. In the present study, this refers to the area where parents have low income, and most learners are from less privileged backgrounds.

Township Schools: Refers to any school situated in a township area with a predominant number of black learners. In the present study, this refers to the public schools found in townships.

Insecure parent-child attachment: An attachment disorder is a type of behavioural disorder that affects a person's ability to form and maintain relationships. These disorders typically develop in childhood. They can result when a child is unable to have a consistent emotional connection with a parent or primary caregiver (Legg, 2020). In the present study, this refers to instances where learners have inconsistent connection with parents or caregivers at home.

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE PHD Thesis

This study is presented using the structure below:

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This chapter presented the introduction and background of the study. The chapter presents the background of the study, research problem, rationale, aims of the research, key research questions of the study, clarification of key concepts, and finally the structure of this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consisted of an in-depth study of existing research and debates on attachment and social competence of learners in schools at various levels. The literature has been reviewed in relation to the study objectives.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This chapter discussed the two theoretical frameworks that supported this study. In addition, justification of the theoretical framework has been discussed at length.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design and methodology adopted for the study. This includes the research paradigm, design, methodology, participants, data collection methods, ethical considerations, trustworthiness of data, and data analysis.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter consisted of findings, interpretations and theoretical analysis. It further looked at the data discussion at and descriptive and evaluative level while expanding on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The final chapter looked at the summary of findings, discussions, conclusions and recommendations. This chapter further presents the framework recommended to assist teachers to make schools a secure base for all learners in township schools.

1.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the study. The presentation encompassed the background, objectives, problem statement, and justification of the study. The following chapter presents a thorough assessment of pertinent literature to acquire and offer novel viewpoints and understandings on the topics of attachment, social competence, and the level of support provided by teacher training programs for stable attachment in schools.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a vast body of literature on attachment, with a specific emphasis on the rare scenario paradigm. The chapter commences with an examination of the notion of attachment. Furthermore, the study discusses the importance of attachment, core principles of attachment, the distinct stages of attachment formation, and diverse attachment patterns. The chapter also discusses social competence, social incompetence, local and global debates on teacher programs, and methods for improving township schools to create a stable environment for at-risk or vulnerable learners.

2.2: ATTACHMENT

Attachment refers to the inclination of young children to actively seek out and establish a connection with one or more reliable caregivers, finding comfort in their interactions (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). Stanojević and Nedeljković (2020) define attachment as a psychological connection formed between a mother and child during early development, which last throughout their lifetime. The term "attachment" was introduced by John Bowlby and further developed by Mary Ainsworth. Attachment refers to a collection of work that explores the human social attachment phenomenon. The initial idea posited a psychobiological foundation and purpose for the child's attachment to their caregiver. Attachment is a significant subject in the examination of parent-child relationships (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, & 1980). Attachment refers to a powerful and long-lasting emotional bond that connects one individual to another, regardless of the passage of time or physical distance. It is a crucial aspect of human growth that impacts a person's social, emotional, and cognitive welfare. This process begins in early infancy and continues into maturity, shaping how individuals form and sustain relationships. Attachment is an ongoing and evolving process where individuals establish and modify their emotional bonds throughout their lives (Thompson, Simpson & Berlin, 2022).

The attachment elucidates the importance of the emotional connection between children and their main caregivers. It also highlights the impact of these early experiences and emphasizes the infant's requirement for seeking closeness to the attachment figure to obtain protection and security (Rawatlal, Kliewer & Pillay, 2015). Furthermore, attachment emphasizes the infant's

requirement for engaging in proximity-seeking behavior towards the attachment figure in order to primarily get protection and security (Rawatlal, Kliewer & Pillay, 2015).

Attachment has been demonstrated to offer significant understanding into emotional functioning and relationships in adulthood. Research highlights the importance of a child's attachment figure in providing a solid and stable foundation for the kid to rely on, while also being highly attuned to the child's physical and emotional need (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). The fundamental concept that underlies attachment theory is to foster relationships that promote survival for the advantage of new borns, who are the most susceptible individuals in the community, and to form a strong connection with them (Bowlby, 1982). The attachment system effectively presents the following fundamental inquiry: Is the attachment figure in close proximity, easily accessible, and actively engaged? If the youngster has the belief that the answer to this question is "affirmative," they will experience emotions of affection, reassurance, protection, and self-assurance. However, if the child believes that the answer to this question is "no," they will experience concern or danger and are more inclined to participate in negative behaviour. These behaviours continue until the child is able to regain a satisfactory level of physical or psychological closeness to the person they are attached to, or until the youngster gives up, which may happen during a protracted period of separation or loss (Chopik, Eldelstein & Fraley, 2013). Primary caregivers, usually parents or guardians, provide continuous care, support, and attention to meet the child's needs, resulting in the development of an attachment relationship. These attachment figures provide a feeling of security and comfort. Infants and early children display attachment behaviours to stay close to their primary caregivers. These behaviours may include shedding tears, embracing someone closely, and seeking close physical contact to feel safe and comforted.

Attachment figures provide a stable and reliable base for individuals to explore their surroundings. Having a consistent and dependable attachment figure gives individuals a sense of security and empowers them to explore the world, knowing they have a trustworthy source of assistance. The process of forming attachments is extremely important during a specific period in early life, often known as the "critical period" or "sensitive period" (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Attachment experiences play a role in shaping internal working models, which are mental representations of oneself, others, and relationships. Cognitive frameworks have a significant impact on how individuals perceive and behave in their interpersonal relationships throughout their entire lives (Abedini, 2023).

Attachment generally forms over the period from 8 to 18 months of age. In this period, new born babies eagerly seek out their caretakers as their mobility skills develop. They maintain consistent eye contact with their caretakers and carefully watch their responses, reciprocating accordingly. Infants in this stage of development carefully examine and understand how their caregiver responds to them, and anticipate how the caregiver will react to their level of discomfort (Turner, 2011). Children older than 18 months begin exhibiting signs of affection and actively seek love, attention, and physical touch from their caregivers. Additionally, they develop a sensitivity to the emotions of their caretakers (Turner, 2011). An individual's attachment is intricately connected to their interpersonal behaviour and cognition, the calibre of their relationships, their capacity to manage emotions, their self-worth, and their overall adaptation and psychological well. Additionally, the child's welfare is equally reliant on the parent's actual presence, willingness to communicate, promptness in addressing the child's requests for help, and comprehension of the child's needs, which are known as internal working models (Bowlby, 2015).

Attachment is recognized as a mutual connection between a baby and its mother or caregiver, and develops during the first year of life. Attachment is established through the interplay of specific component reactions that assist the bonding between a mother and her infant, as well as between a newborn and its mother. These autonomous behaviours, such as conforming, consuming, chasing, crying, and smiling, emerge independently during early childhood. The infant in this contact gains knowledge about how to form connections and engage with people, which is essential for the child's future behavioural development. Furthermore, if the relational pattern is disrupted during the first year of life, it can have long-lasting and severe effects on the infant's capacity to establish satisfying interpersonal relationships and participate in social activities (Karakaş & Dağlı, 2019).

Based on Bowlby's argument, it is essential for new borns and young children to have a strong and continuous bond with their mother or a permanent mother figure. This bond should be marked by warmth, intimacy, and mutual fulfilment. The relationship between a child and parent has a significant part in creating the internal cognitive frameworks or mental models that determine how one sees oneself in relation to others, ultimately impacting one's attachment style. The idea of attachment has been associated with various characteristics, such as the quality of an individual's upbringing, the perceived level of parenting they had during

childhood, their social skills, and the quality of their closest connections throughout their life (Zain et al., 2023).

Attachment has far-reaching effects on various aspects of development, including emotional regulation, social skills, cognitive capacities, and the formation of future relationships. Attachment patterns established throughout early childhood can endure in adult relationships. Attachment theory has a significant impact on parenting practices. Providing compassionate and attentive care is essential for fostering the development of secure attachment in children, which subsequently improves their emotional well-being. Attachment experiences exhibit a clear and direct relationship with mental health outcomes. Secure attachment is associated with enhanced mental well-being, while insecure attachment patterns may contribute to emotional difficulties and challenges. Therapeutic therapies can help individuals understand and resolve attachment-related problems, hence fostering the establishment of healthier and more secure relationships (Zain et al., 2023).
The subsequent part provided further elaboration on the peculiar circumstance protocol, which is an essential element of attachment theory. The unusual scenario process serves as the fundamental basis for the study of attachment styles, which constitutes a significant portion of this research.

2.3 STRANGE SITUATION PROCEDURE

Ainsworth's subsequent research, specifically the recognition of significant individual deviations in attachment behaviour using the widely recognized Strange Situation Procedure, redirected focus towards parenting. Ainsworth conducted thorough observations of households in Uganda and subsequently in the United States. These observations suggested that variations in parenting, specifically in a specific aspect known as sensitivity, significantly influenced whether a child developed a secure or insecure attachment to their caregiver (Fearon & Roisman, 2017).

The "Strange Situation" procedure is a research approach developed by psychologist Mary Ainsworth to assess and categorize the attachment styles of infants and young children. The psychologist conducted a study with the objective of understanding the intense distress experienced by new borns who had experienced parental separation. Bowlby observed that new borns who were separated from their parents would display intense behaviours, such as crying,

clutching, and searching, in attempt to prevent separation or to be reunited with a missing parent (Chopik, Eldelstein, & Fraley, 2013). The term "safe haven" refers to the action of attachment figures providing reassurance, comfort, and aid (Higgenbotham, 2016). The Strange Situation technique has been widely used in studies to investigate attachment patterns and their consequences for baby development. This study provides valuable insights into the dynamics of the caregiver-child relationship and the influence of attachment styles on a child's behaviour in unfamiliar and possibly stressful situations.

The Strange Situation is a standardized technique that entails a series of brief separations and reunions between a child and their caregiver. The researcher clarifies the technique and obtains informed consent from the parent or caregiver. The caregiver and child are provided with access to the playroom, which is equipped with toys and a two-way mirror for observation purposes. The caregiver and child participate in collaborative activities within the playroom. The researcher observes the child's behaviour and the interaction between the caregiver and the child while allowing the child to freely explore and play (Bick, 2012). Only the caregiver and child are in the playroom. Soon after, a stranger enters the room and tries to interact with the child. After a brief period of separation, the caregiver returns to the playroom. The researcher meticulously analyses the child's reaction to the caregiver's return, closely observing the child's behaviours and their attempts to seek comfort or reassurance. The caretaker leaves the room, leaving the young person alone with the unfamiliar figure. The researcher investigates the child's responses to the caregiver's absence and the presence of a stranger (Ainsworth, Blehar, & Wall, 2015).

After the caregiver comes back to the playroom, the researcher attentively observes the child's reaction to the caregiver's second return. In the Third Separation, the caregiver once again leaves the room, leaving the small child alone. The researcher carefully observes the child's behaviour during this final phase of separation (Bick, 2012). The caretaker returns to the playroom once more, this being the final occasion. The researcher observed the child's response to the caregiver's return and evaluated how the child seeks comfort or interacts with the caregiver. A child's attachment styles are categorized into four distinct groups namely, secure attachment, insecure-avoidant attachment, insecure-anxious attachment, and disorganized attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar & Wall, 2015).

2.4 IMPORTANCE OF ATTACHMENT

Attachment has a vital role in various aspects of human development, affecting emotional, social, and cognitive well-being. The significance of attachment is apparent throughout an individual's entire lifespan, commencing in infancy and persisting until age (Karakaş & Dağlı, 2019). Therefore, creating a safe bond throughout childhood has a big impact on the course of one's life. The recognition of the importance of attachment emphasizes the necessity of cultivating strong caregiver-child bonds and establishing supportive conditions to promote healthy emotional development (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017). Attachment experiences have a profound and enduring impact on an individual's general well-being and the quality of their relationships throughout their lives.

Attachment relationships are essential because they provide a stable basis for emotional regulation. This allows infants and children to learn how to manage their emotions by receiving attentive and supportive care from their caregivers. This statement lays the foundation for an individual's emotional condition (Crouch, 2015). Moreover, attachment cultivates a sense of confidence and security for individuals. Having a kind and attentive caregiver provides comfort, especially during times of unease, worry, or uncertainty. Moreover, attachment is a crucial factor in influencing the development of social skills and interpersonal relationships (Adar, Davidof & Elkana, 2022). Children who form secure attachments exhibit improved social skills, including the ability to form meaningful relationships with both their peers and adults. Secure bonding is linked to positive cognitive development. Children that possess a feeling of security are more likely to engage in active exploration of their environment, actively participate in educational activities, and develop cognitive abilities with confidence (Wang, Yang & Zhang, 2021).

Attachment experiences have a significant impact on language development. Engaged caregivers who responsively interact with infants and young children have a vital impact on developing their language skills and communication abilities. Attachment patterns established throughout early relationships serve as a blueprint for future partnerships. Individuals who have secure attachments are more likely to form healthy and lasting relationships during both adolescence and adulthood (Crouch, 2015). The emotional support and validation provided by caregivers contribute to the development of a strong self-image. The establishment of emotional connections with people is essential for developing the capacity to bounce back and adjust in the presence of challenges. Children who have formed secure attachments are more likely to have increased resilience when faced with challenges, disappointments, and stressful situations

that occur throughout their lives (Luthar, 2015). Attachment experiences influence the regulation of the stress response system. Developing strong and reliable connections can mitigate the impact of stressors, while unstable and unreliable relationships might contribute to heightened stress responses (Pietromonaco & Beck, 2015). Individuals who have a secure attachment style exhibit a robust sense of assurance in their ability to explore their environment and develop a sense of autonomy. People rely on their social connections as a dependable and secure base from which they can confidently interact and navigate the outside world. The relationship between attachment and mental wellbeing outcomes is highly intertwined. Research has shown that having stable relationships is associated with lower rates of anxiety, sadness, and other mental health problems. On the other hand, insecure attachments could potentially worsen emotional troubles (Ragelienė, 2016).

Furthermore, studies suggest that adults who had consistent and secure emotional connections during their early years are more likely to develop favorable parenting strategies, therefore establishing a caring and encouraging environment for their own children. Attachment experiences have a significant impact on the development of interpersonal trust (Neppl, Jeon, Diggs & Donnellan, 2020). Individuals that possess stable attachment patterns generally exhibit a positive outlook on relationships and display a greater inclination to trust others. The next section examines the four distinct stages of attachment.

2.5 STAGES OF ATTACHMENT

Bowlby's stages of attachment are typically categorized into numerous classifications. It is important to recognize that these stages do not progress in a strictly linear manner, and children may move between them in a non-linear fashion (Bowlby, 2015). The stages of attachment can be categorized into four discrete stages (Mcleod, 2024), which are discussed below:

Stage 1: *Pre-Attachment (Birth to 6 Weeks)*

During the early stage, infants exhibit inherent behaviours intended to capture the caregivers' attention, such as wailing and clutching (Sullivan, 2011). They have not yet developed a distinct preference for a particular caregiver, and their behaviour does not vary depending on who takes care of them. This stage is known as the pre-attachment stage and no attachment and emotional development has taken place, only the desire for attention which will lead to distinct preference on the second stage.

Stage 2: *Formation of Attachment (6 Weeks to 6-8 Months)*

Infants start to exhibit a predilection for caregivers they are familiar with. They are likely to exhibit a more favourable response to the voice, touch, and closeness of their main caregiver. Nevertheless, they do not exhibit significant anguish when removed from the primary caregiver (Sullivan et al, 2011). The second stage is vital as the infant is forming attachment and can respond to the main caregiver. The child is slowly developing closeness and attachment to their main caregiver.

Stage 3: *Explicit Attachment (6-8 Months to 18 Months)*

This is a more distinct and well-defined phase of attachment. Infants develop stronger bonds with caregivers, exhibiting separation anxiety while they are apart from them. Infants want proximity and seek comfort from their primary caregiver, whom they use as a secure basis for exploration (Bowlby, 2015). In this stage the infant has developed a distinct preference for a particular caregiver. This is a stage were infants secure or insecure attachment takes formation which lead to the establishment of a mutually beneficial connection which is the last stage of development.

Stage 4: *Establishment of a Mutually Beneficial Connection (18 Months and Beyond)*

As children mature, the attachment bond becomes increasingly mutual. The youngster assumes a more proactive role in the relationship, articulating their needs, desires, and preferences. The caregiver reciprocates by reacting to the child's cues and fulfilling their wants (Sullivan et al, 2011).

In conclusion each of these four stages are delicate and crucial for the establishment of attachment, as well as for social and emotional development in children (Duschinsky, 2020). These stages of development played a pivotal role for comprehending the formation of attachment styles to be explored on the next section.

2.6 ATTACHMENT STYLES

Somohano (2013) defines attachment styles as the way individuals form connections with others, especially in close relationships, which are influenced by their early interactions with caregivers. The formation of these attachment types is influenced by the quality of care and amount of attentiveness provided by caregivers during infancy and early childhood (Sroufe,

2015). Attachment styles have a significant influence on various aspects of people's relationships, including how they communicate, regulate their emotions, and handle disagreements. Attachment styles play a vital impact in individuals' self-perception and emotional management (Somohano, 2013). The interaction between a kid and their caregivers promotes the development of internal cognitive frameworks in the young individual. These styles are flexible and can be influenced by later experiences and interventions (Alhusen et al., 2013). Alternatively, a person's attachment style may change if their expectations do not match the inconsistent experiences they have with a child. Understanding an individual's attachment style can provide valuable insights into relationship dynamics and patterns of behaviour (Chopik, Eldelstein & Fraley, 2013).

In addition, ~~(Bowlby, 2015)~~ contend that attachment styles can be best described as identifying the elements that provoke sensitivity or insensitivity in a relationship, as well as the related strategies used to handle such insensitivity. Attachment styles should be utilized as tools to promote heightened self-awareness and understanding. The attachment patterns of most persons are thought to originate from their early years, although it is possible to develop an insecure attachment style later in life. The caregiver's level of sensitivity significantly influences whether a child develops a secure or insecure attachment with them (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). Understanding that attachment patterns provide a framework for appreciating the intricacies of the caregiver-child interaction is crucial. These repercussions significantly influence the child's social and emotional growth over the course of their lives. Moreover, differences in individuals, external factors, and social standards can impact attachment experiences (Allen, 2015). The four attachment styles, namely secure, avoidant, anxious, and disordered, are discussed below:

2.6.1 Secure Attachment Style

Extensive research conducted over the past three decades has shown that infants who receive consistent and responsive care that is tailored to their developmental needs during the first year or two of their lives are more likely to develop a secure attachment to their mother (Gharaibeh & Hamlan, 2012). Secure attachment is formed via the successful pursuit and reception of assistance from one or more individuals who serve as attachment figures. A secure relationship is established when a child's primary caregiver demonstrates sensitivity and attentiveness (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1973). According to Bretherton (2013), infants who have mothers who are sensitive are securely attached, but babies with mothers who are less sensitive

are more likely to be classified as insecure. Secure attachment is essential for the optimal emotional and social development of a child.

Within the context of the unconventional scenario paradigm, the term "secure attachment" refers to children who rely on their caregivers to display indications of distress when separated and joy when reunited. The young individual would undergo emotional discomfort but maintain trust in the caregiver's future reappearance (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020). .A confident individual has the conviction that others will offer help and aid, relying on previous experiences that have led them to this conclusion. As a consequence, there is an enhancement in social adaptability (Bureau & Moss, 2010).The key component of secure attachment is the conviction that when confronted with a difficulty, one can solicit aid from an attachment figure. The second part proposes that an attachment figure will demonstrate responsiveness when asked for help (Sullivan et al 2011) while the third factor implies that requesting support from an attachment figure will lead to a feeling of comfort. This concept promotes a pervasive sense of safety and connection, allowing those with a strong sense of security to maintain composure in stressful situations and experience prolonged periods of positive emotions. Furthermore, it fosters a sense of personal worth and competence (Chopik, Eldelstein & Fraley, 2013).

A secure connection provides a firm basis for children, enabling them to actively participate in activities such as exploration, play, and social interactions (van Deventer, 2011). According to Bowlby, those who have developed a secure attachment are likely to have a cognitive representation of their attachment figures as being sensitive, attentive, and supportive. An sympathetic caregiver establishes a supportive atmosphere for her newborn, even in difficult circumstances (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020). A secure individual has a self-perception that includes the feeling that they are deserving of affection and have value. Individuals with a resilient mindset can confidently navigate the world and efficiently manage or seek help when faced with potentially challenging situations. According to Bowlby (1973), infants who have not had their needs properly met in terms of comfort and predictability perceive the world as deficient in these aspects. A secure attachment style is characterized by a positive and stable pattern of interpersonal relationships, particularly in romantic partnerships. Interpersonal sensitivity, serves as a foundation for promoting resilient emotional development, flexibility, and positive social interactions throughout an individual's entire life (Fearon & Roisman, 2017).

A secure relationship often develops when caregivers consistently and responsively meet the emotional and physical needs of the individual. A secure attachment style in children is defined

by traits such as trust, confidence, comfort with intimacy, effective communication, a healthy balance between independence and dependency, positive self-esteem, emotional regulation, and resilience. Individuals with a secure attachment style have a deep conviction in the reliability of others and a strong confidence in the trustworthiness of their caregivers. They maintain the assumption that others will help when needed. Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy possess trust in the good intentions of others and believe in their own ability to effectively navigate the challenges and barriers of life with resilience (Fearon & Roisman, 2017).

Individuals with a secure attachment type experience a sense of comfort and ease when it comes to forming emotional intimacy in their relationships. Individuals with IPS demonstrate the capacity to express their own emotions and show a genuine desire to comprehend and sympathize with the emotions of others, without experiencing any feelings of fear or unease. Communication within safe collaborations is marked by transparency and effectiveness Individuals that possess a secure attachment style are able to boldly and efficiently express their desires and emotions, while also displaying awareness and responsiveness towards the needs of others (Goleman, 2021).. Secure attachment allows individuals to achieve a balanced state of autonomy and interdependence. Individuals with emotional intelligence possess the capacity to autonomously navigate interpersonal connections while also finding joy and satisfaction in emotional experiences. Individuals with stable attachment likely to have a positive self-perception and strong self-esteem (Sagone, et al., 2023) because they possess a feeling of self-value and believe they are deserving of love and support. In addition, individuals with a stable attachment type has the capacity to proficiently regulate and govern their emotions, which may be regarded as a noteworthy characteristic. Moreover, individuals have the capacity to effectively manage their emotions and cope with stress, relying on strong interpersonal relationships for support when needed (Fearon & Roisman, 2017). Individuals that exhibit a secure attachment style have a firm belief in the enduring nature of their relationships and possess a sense of confidence and reliance in their partners or loved ones (Sagone, et al., 2023).

Secure attachment allows individuals to effectively navigate both closeness and distance with ease. Individuals with this condition demonstrate a lack of excessive concern about losing their independence and do not exhibit significant avoidance of emotional intimacy. Individuals with stable attachment styles exhibit a significant degree of flexibility in managing relationship changes, including transitions, life events, and new phases (Cook, 2016). Securely attached persons possess the ability to adjust to changes confidently. Moreover, they engage in open and

honest conversation, actively seek compromise, and effectively collaborate to resolve issues (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020). In conclusion, numerous studies consistently indicate that children with a secure attachment tend to exhibit positive communication patterns, experience reduced levels of anxiety and frustration, employ effective strategies to cope with distress, and demonstrate higher levels of academic and social competence (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020). Farooq, & Majeed, (2024), argue that persons who are secure possess a stable and robust self-perception. Individuals with a high sense of self-worth exhibit more emotional resilience. They are less susceptible to mood disorders and enjoy more consistent and satisfying relationships. Furthermore, persons who possess a strong sense of security tend to exhibit traits such as curiosity, creativity, empathy, and tenderness towards others as a result of their self-assurance. A secure bond allows children to explore their surroundings without hesitation or fear (Sterkenburg, van Rensburg & van Devente, 2011). Moreover, it is reported that these young individuals acquire a robust feeling of self-confidence and reliance on both themselves and others (Farooq, & Majeed, 2024).

Secure attachment patterns produce beneficial outcomes, while insecure attachment styles lead to harmful repercussions (Kerns & Brumariu, 2014). Individuals with safe attachment patterns tend to have relationships that are marked by positivity and good mental and physical health. They have a profound sense of ease in forming intimate bonds with others and can trust them. Individuals that have stable attachment exhibit adept emotional regulation skills, which allow them to efficiently manage stress and conquer challenges with resilience. Cultivating a secure relationship cultivates a positive self-perception and enhances overall well-being and self-assurance (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020). Children who have secure relationships are more likely to have elevated levels of involvement and self-assurance in school settings. Individuals with secure attachments typically have healthier and more satisfying relationships, while those with insecure attachment styles may encounter challenges in their relationships (Simpson, 2017). A secure connection acts as a protective measure against the development of mental health issues. People who have a secure attachment style often show increased resilience when faced with challenges in life. According to Greenman (2022), children from secure attachments may have better coping mechanisms and a more positive outlook.

2.6.2 Avoidant Attachment Style

Avoidant attachment arises from a childhood dynamic in which the child's emotional needs were disregarded or withheld, either through direct rejection or because of the parent's absence (Lai & Carr, 2018). When the caretakers consistently fail to meet the child's requirements, the child quickly realizes that they must take care of themselves, leading to the development of strong self-reliance and independence. An individual with a dismissive-avoidant attachment style is unlikely to have received significant emotional guidance or nurturing from their parents during their upbringing. This phenomenon occurs when a youngster adjusts their behaviour according on their perception of how their caregiver will react to them. Avoidant attachment style has been linked to a range of challenges in adulthood, including engaging in criminal behaviour, experiencing insecure psychosocial adjustment, having unsatisfactory interpersonal connections, and facing a higher likelihood of developing mental illnesses (Barber, 2018).

Van ‘t Riet, & Ruiter, 2013) propose that avoidant behaviour serves as a protective response to unresponsiveness and rage. The youngsters inhibit their adverse emotions when in the company of the unsupportive attachment figure, in order to avoid the possibility of being rejected or separated from them. "In the context of the strange situation procedure, avoidant children exhibit a lack of emotional response when their mother departs. They do not shed tears, make efforts to locate their mother, or display any overt signs of distress." (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020, pp.10). Unfazed by her departure or return, they have become accustomed to their unmet expectations and fulfil their mother's demands by remaining unresponsive. The moms exhibit a regular pattern of not responding to signals and requirements, indicating their involvement in their children's life is structured according to a schedule they deem more suitable.

According to Cassidy, & Kobak, 2015), avoidant children exhibit a lack of desire to seek comfort or express their anguish or vulnerability. They also tend to avoid forming emotional bonds. They actively distance themselves from the caregiver due to their inconsistent, unavailable, or unresponsive behaviour, both physically and emotionally. The caregiver disengages from assisting the kid with challenging tasks, and the mother is often inaccessible when the child is experiencing emotional distress or requires attention. Individuals exhibiting avoidant attachment style actively avoid forming emotional bonds with others and often perceive themselves as inadequate and independent, believing they do not require close relationships (van ‘t Riet & Ruiter, 2013).

Additional studies on adult attachment have uncovered intriguing intricacies regarding the connections between avoidance and defence. For instance, van ‘t Riet & Ruiter, 2013) argued that persons with a frightened avoidant attachment style were less effective in suppressing their emotions when specifically directed to repress their thoughts and feelings. They might experience discomfort when it comes to forming emotional bonds and may prefer independently dealing with difficulties. Individuals with an avoidant attachment style may find emotional intimacy to be uncomfortable. Individuals in this context may encounter challenges in articulating or conveying their own emotions and may face difficulties in establishing emotional connections with others (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020).

Individuals exhibiting an avoidant attachment style may encounter difficulties in placing trust in others and may exhibit reluctance in depending on others for emotional assistance (Heim, 2015). This may arise because of early experiences characterized by emotional detachment from caregivers. Avoidant persons frequently place a high value on autonomy and self-sufficiency. Avoidant persons may minimize the importance of connections in their lives (Duchesne & Larose, 2007). They might perceive relationships as somewhat less significant compared to other facets of life, such as individual accomplishments or autonomy. Individuals exhibiting an avoidant attachment style tend to refrain from seeking emotional support or solace from others due to their apprehension that it renders them susceptible (Jenkins, 2016). Individuals in this situation may encounter difficulties in recognizing and expressing their own feelings, and may exhibit reduced sensitivity towards the emotions of others. Avoidant persons may have acquired the ability to repress their emotional demands as a means of evading disappointment or rejection.

Lastly, individuals who are avoidant may display certain characteristics such as possessing the ability to manage stress or confront obstacles autonomously. They may exhibit a decreased propensity to seek assistance from others and may instead opt to independently manage challenges. Avoidant individuals often struggle with the challenge of expressing their emotions in relationships. They exhibit a tendency to be cautious and reticent, disclosing just a little amount of personal information to others. Individuals exhibiting an avoidant attachment style may terminate relationships early, particularly when they perceive a rise in emotional closeness. Individuals may experience unease or discomfort when engaging in physical displays of affection or maintaining proximity in interpersonal relationships. Avoidant individuals may prefer maintaining a specific degree of physical separation (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020).

Individuals exhibiting an insecure-avoidant attachment style may encounter difficulties in placing trust in others and may actively avoid forming close and intimate relationships (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020). Individuals may tend to maintain a specific level of emotional detachment from others and struggle with both expressing and identifying their own emotions. There could be apprehension about relying on others, resulting in an inclination towards autonomy and self-sufficiency. Individuals exhibiting this attachment type may encounter feelings of worry within their relationships, as they have apprehensions of being abandoned and struggle to place trust in the reliability of others. Individuals with this condition may tend to excessively seek reassurance and approval from others, grappling with a deep-seated fear of rejection or feeling unloved. Establishing and upholding suitable emotional boundaries in partnerships can present difficulties.

2.6.3 Anxious/Ambivalent Attachment Style

According to Stanojević and Nedeljković, (2020) an anxious/ambivalent attachment style, often referred to as insecure-ambivalent attachment, is one of the three primary attachment styles recognized in attachment theory. This attachment pattern commonly arises as a result of inconsistent caring, characterized by a caregiver who is sporadically responsive and accessible. Individuals exhibiting an anxious/ambivalent attachment style frequently encounter increased levels of concern over the accessibility and attentiveness of their caregivers. Anxiety is characterized as an excessive or acute state of anxiety or fear in response to ordinary situations or daily activities (Bystritsky, & Kronemyer, 2014). During the experimental scenario, infants with anxiety exhibit crying behaviour upon the departure of their mother, yet do not experience comfort or relief upon her return (Ainsworth, Waters & Wall, 2015). They experience ambivalence, desiring interaction, but once they attain it, they struggle to maintain composure and find it difficult to unwind. The presence of the mother is unknown, causing the children to feel the need to exert control in order to guarantee her presence. In this context, the child's surroundings are marked by an erratic and unstable atmosphere, with a strong demand for affection, emotional closeness, and a persistent fear of being deserted. They grapple with ambiguity, engaging in excessive rumination and hyper-analysing insignificant aspects of a scenario. A parent's behaviour towards their child might vary, with instances of both affectionate care and occasional absence or feeling overwhelmed by the child's demands (Ugarte & Hastings, 2022). The child's heightened sensitivity to the parent's reaction due to the

inconsistency leads them to explore various behaviours in order to fulfil their needs and establish a sense of security.

Ultimately, this results in an exaggerated concentration on the other individual and their requirements, frequently resulting in frustration due to the unpredictability of the scenario and feeling overwhelmed by the emotional energy used. Additional factors that can contribute to the development of anxious attachment include inadequate boundaries, the reversal of parent-child roles, or a child being forced to assume a parental role, such as caring for younger siblings (Macfie, Brumariu & Lyons-Ruth, 2015). Attachment figures of nervous children may possess a background characterized by instances of abuse, drug utilization, sadness, or experiences of loss such as death or divorce (Carlson 1998). They are prone to being invasive, inconsiderate, psychologically unavailable, neglectful, and engaging in physical and emotional abuse. Additional traits encompass a notable feeling of insecurity, heightened vigilance, diminished self-worth, anxiety, a sense of inadequacy, impulsivity leading to heightened susceptibility to stress, predisposition to depression, and a higher likelihood of turning to alcohol as a coping mechanism (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020).

Children that are insecure and apprehensive do not possess a structured reaction towards their attachment figures. During the toddler stage, children exhibit conflicting attachment behaviours and often appear hesitant or uncertain. Additionally, their stress-related behaviours may escalate when they approach their primary caregivers. These behaviours are frequently transient and challenging to analyse. Their play can be described as exhibiting aggression and vulnerability (Kind, 2020) During middle adolescence, individuals may exhibit a pronounced need for their primary caregiver during times of stress, struggle with the process of detachment, display excessive worry about the location of their primary caregiver, and experience challenges in recovering from distressing experiences. Children that experience anxious insecure attachment may exhibit passive, whiney, fussy, helpless, or immature behaviour and display resistance towards the attachment figure. As children mature, they may exhibit a strong need for and preoccupation with their primary caregiver, and they may display hyperactive behaviour as they move from one thing to another.

Individuals exhibiting an anxious/ambivalent attachment type frequently experience apprehension around abandonment and harbour concerns regarding the dependability of their caregivers. They may have concerns regarding the consistent fulfilment of their demands

(Mousavi, 2016). An anxious/ambivalent attachment style frequently emerges in response to inconsistent caring. Caregivers may exhibit intermittent responsiveness, resulting in fluctuating availability and attunement, which might generate ambiguity for the child (Ugarte & Hastings, 2022). Individuals with an anxious/ambivalent attachment style may find it difficult to establish and sustain emotional boundaries. They may encounter difficulties in achieving a harmonious equilibrium between their personal wants and desires and the needs and desires of others.

Individuals with an anxious/ambivalent attachment style sometimes face a considerable difficulty in establishing trust (Lee, 2013). They may struggle to have confidence in others' consistent availability and responsiveness to their emotional needs. Individuals exhibiting this attachment style may exhibit profound emotional responses to relational circumstances. Individuals with this disposition may exhibit a heightened emotional response due to their acute sensitivity towards imagined threats of rejection or desertion (Bowlby, 2015). Individuals with anxious/ambivalent tendencies may frequently seek ongoing reassurance from others, especially within the context of partnerships (Evraire, Dozois & Wilde, 2022). They might possess a pronounced desire for validation and affirmation of their value and attractiveness. There is frequently an obsession with relationships and a profound longing for emotional intimacy. Nevertheless, this fixation can result in a phobia of being rejected and a proclivity to excessively rely on others (Evraire, Dozois & Wilde, 2022).

Lastly, Individuals who are anxious or ambivalent may display certain characteristics such as emotions of jealousy and possessiveness inside their relationships. Individuals may exhibit heightened sensitivity towards perceived dangers to the relationship and display intense reactions towards actual or perceived rivalry for attention (Buunk & Massar, 2023). Individuals may exhibit a proclivity to excessively scrutinize relationships and construe confusing events in a pessimistic manner. Individuals exhibiting this attachment style may possess a heightened sensitivity towards potential indications of rejection (Set, 2019). Emotional management can be difficult, as individuals may go through periods of strong emotional euphoria and sadness (Buunk & Massar, 2023). They may struggle to calm themselves during moments of distress.

2.6.4 Disorganized/ Fearful Attachment Style

The ultimate attachment style is an amalgamation of both anxious and fearful attachment forms. Within this group, youngsters exhibit a tendency to shun close relationships and are prone to sudden outbursts of fury and indignation. Additionally, they struggle with effectively regulating

their negative emotions. They may exhibit volatile behavior, such as initiating physical altercations and damaging objects in their vicinity. These children struggle to establish a bond with their caregivers because they experience significant levels of fear and anxiety (Bowlby, 2015). This is often caused by a lack of sensitivity and tolerance demonstrated by the caregiver towards the child. In the Strange Situation, children who were disorganized displayed contradictory behaviors, perplexity, or a lack of organization. This attachment pattern is frequently correlated with more difficult home conditions (Mancini, et al., 2020).

Disorganized attachment commonly arises when the child's caregiver serves as both a refuge and a cause of peril or apprehension (Reisz, Duschinsky & Siegel 2018). On one side of the spectrum, this can manifest as violent family systems, but it can also arise in less severe contexts characterized by significant dysfunction, chaos, or high levels of stress. The youngster experiences inner anguish due to the unpredictability and volatility, as they feel torn between seeking safety from their parent and being uncertain about the response they will receive. The caregiver of a child with fearful-avoidant attachment style may exhibit very unpredictable behavior, causing the child to oscillate between demanding anxious attention and withdrawing in an avoidant manner (Beeney, 2017). The child typically acquires a heightened state of attention towards the events occurring within their household. A heightened state of vigilance to evaluate their level of safety and the presence of any potential danger. The youngster may exhibit reactive behavior, become defensive, and experience difficulties in managing rage.

According to Reisz, Duschinsky and Siegel (2018), the ramifications of this attachment style include the development of a want for intimacy in youngsters, accompanied by a profound dread of being abandoned and rejected. This can result in unpredictable and inconsistent behavior. Children exhibiting this attachment style may display negative characteristics such as frequently encountering difficulties in placing trust in others because of a deep-seated dread of being betrayed. Additionally, such children often experience a heavy burden of guilt, shame and may grapple with emotions of being flawed and inadequate. In addition, this frequently manifests as people-pleasing tendencies and inadequate boundaries in youngsters, which can be challenging to eradicate quickly. Disorganized attachment may result in challenges when establishing enduring and reliable partnerships. People may encounter emotional volatility, contradictory actions, and difficulties in managing their emotions (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017).
Up next is a discussion of factors as identified in research that contribute to secure attachment among learners.

2.7 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SECURE ATTACHMENT STYLES AMONG LEARNERS

Various elements contribute to the formation of a secure attachment. Recognizing that safe attachment is an ongoing and dynamic process, affected by multiple factors, is of utmost importance (Howe & Betts, 2023). This section presents research that emphasized on the factors that contribute to the development of secure attachment styles. A study conducted by Gharaibeh and Hamlan (2012) in Jordan and Israel investigated the characteristics or factors linked to a secure attachment. A sample size of 246 initial Jordanian moms participated in a structured survey, and maternal self-efficacy was identified as the primary factor in understanding the phenomena. The study's findings revealed that a robust sense of self-efficacy, self-assurance, autonomy, support, and affection are the main factors that contribute to this type of attachment. The study reviewed above specifically focused on moms rather than secondary school learners as participants. Thus, this present study addressed the research deficiencies in the existing literature by specifically examining secondary school learners.

Zain et al., (2023) conducted a study examining the correlation between parenting styles and attachment types with partners among perinatal Japanese women. The research involved a sample of 223 women in their third trimester of pregnancy. The study findings indicated that several factors were associated with a more positive experience. These factors include emotional availability within the home, responsive caregiving, availability, positive interactions, consistency, support of exploration, sensitivity, availability of a secure base, parental support and motivation, parental provision, family protection, emotional support, cultural considerations, parental wellness, and responsive educational and home environments. Support and motivation have a significant positive correlation with the level of confidence in baby care practices. The study found that husbands played a vital function as a support system, and this level of assistance was positively linked to the mother's ability to handle the care of a baby (Zain et al., 2023). Furthermore, although the Zain et al., (2023) focused on pregnant women, the present study addressed a research vacuum by specifically concentrating on learners in secondary schools.

In addition, Rolfe, (2020) argues that being attentive and sensitive to a child's needs, especially during infancy, cultivates a sense of safety and stability. Consistent and punctual care from caregivers has a beneficial effect on the development of a strong emotional bond between a kid and their caretakers. Having a primary caregiver who is consistently and reliably present provides a stable and secure basis for a child. The consistent presence of a caregiver fosters a sense of regularity and security. Caregivers who are emotionally attuned play a vital role in promoting the development of secure attachment by responding carefully to a child's signals and cues. As stated in the special issue by Bosmans and Borelli (2022), emotional availability is beneficial for youngsters as it helps them regulate their emotions and feel understood. Establishing stable attachments is heavily dependent on the existence of positive interactions and playful involvement between caregivers and youngsters. Active interactions foster feelings of joy, inquisitiveness, and a positive emotional bond (Venezia, 2023).

Consistent caregivers who administer appropriate and compassionate correction play a vital role in promoting the development of secure attachment. According to Zain et al., (2023), children feel secure and stable when boundaries are set in a way that offers support and comprehension. Positive social interactions with peers can play a role in the development of secure attachment in individuals. Delgado et al., (2022) conducted a comprehensive review that examined the impact of parental attachment on peer interactions among teenagers. The study's results suggest that developing positive relationships with peers can improve a child's perception of their social abilities and sense of belonging.
In the aforementioned study, a systematic review methodology was utilized, however, it did not involve empirical research. Consequently, the current study employed an empirical strategy in its data collection to address existing research deficiencies in the literature.

Moreover, cultural behaviours and ideas might exert an influence on attachment types. Caregivers who exhibit sensitivity and respect for cultural differences play a crucial role in creating a supportive and secure environment for building emotional connections (Bowlby, 2015). The study findings suggest that nurturing and affectionate teacher-student connections in educational settings promote the development of stable attachment. Furthermore, educators who demonstrate support, empathy, and concern for the needs of their learners create an environment that is conducive to fostering strong and positive relationships. A study conducted in Thailand and the United States confirmed that caregivers who possess positive mental well-being and emotional stability are more adept at establishing a secure and supportive attachment

environment (Kaewkerd, Othaganont & Williams, 2021). The study included 140 informal caregivers from sub-district health-promoting facilities in several districts in north eastern Thailand. The participants in the above reviewed study were not secondary school pupils, but rather their caretakers. The present study aimed to fill a gap in the existing literature by focusing on secondary school pupils.

Caregivers who cultivate safe attachment styles often encourage toddlers to explore their surroundings. This type of support for exploration promotes the cultivation of autonomy and competence in youngsters (Delgado, et al., 2022). Responsive caregivers who are sensitive to a child's changing needs and developmental milestones play a vital role in promoting a secure attachment. According to Rolfe (2020), caregivers who establish a stable foundation empower children to boldly investigate their environment, with the assurance that they can always count on a trustworthy and reliable source of help when needed.

Moreover, other studies undertaken in South Africa have examined the different factors that contribute to the formation of secure attachment patterns, particularly in relation to the growth of infants. For instance, according to Mohangi's (2023) research in South Africa, classrooms face multiple difficulties that necessitate the intentional development of significant connections based on trust, stable attachment, care, connectedness, a sense of belonging, and agency. The study conducted by Aspoas and Amod (2014) sought to investigate a parent-infant intervention implemented in a peri-urban township in South Africa. The sample size comprised 11 caregivers. The study findings demonstrated that interventions implemented within the community effectively support and encourage the formation of secure attachment relationships among learners. The aforementioned study above exclusively included caregivers as participants and did not involve secondary school learners. Consequently, the present study aimed to address research deficiencies in the current body of literature by focusing on children who were enrolled in secondary schools.

In South Africa, a study by Bain and Durbach in (2021) explored the function of resilience in fostering safe connections. This study offers a thorough examination of the adaptive reactions displayed by six individuals who encountered Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) throughout their adolescence. The analysis of Adult Attachment Interviews (AAI) and subsequent semi-structured interviews through interpretive thematic analysis revealed recurring themes related to psychological adaptive strategies. Despite experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) in

their youth, these six women were found to have stable attachment states of mind, according to the findings. The crucial element that contributed to their resiliency was identified. The researchers assessed the attachment between 46 young children and their moms, who lived in a black neighbourhood in Johannesburg, South Africa. This study posited that cultural traditions exert a more significant influence on the linguistic expression of attachment patterns than on the tangible interactions between parents and children. The results indicated that the presence of robust cultural traditions had a positive impact on this agreement. The study reviewed above did not include any adolescents or assistant principals as participants, but the sample size was young children and their moms. The current study addressed research gaps noted in the previous literature by focusing on young teenagers and deputy principals in three distinct secondary schools.

Cultural ideas ultimately influence child-rearing methods, which then affect how mothers respond to their infant's attachment patterns. Consequently, this can impact the calibre of compassionate nurturing, which is essential for cultivating secure attachment relationships (Zaidman-Mograbi, le Roux, & Hall, 2020). This study investigated the impact of culture on maternal caregiving habits within the diverse South African context. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews conducted with participants from three research populations in order to ascertain their perceptions of socio-cultural elements influencing attachment. The two samples consisted of mothers and mental health professionals, respectively, representing a diverse range of South African cultures, including Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu, Coloured, Indian, and White. The research findings indicated that culture can influence mother care behaviours. The study emphasized the need to consider the unique conditions of a certain region for understanding secure attachment and maternal sensitivity (Zaidman-Mograbi, le Roux, & Hall, 2020). The prior study, discussed earlier, focused on mothers and mental health experts rather than learners. Therefore, the current study addressed this research vacuum by specifically focusing on secondary school learners.

The next part provides a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature about the elements that lead to the development of insecure attachment styles in young learners (children).

2.8 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLES AMONG LEARNERS

This section presents literature on the factors that contribute to three distinct types of insecure attachment styles, as previously discussed. These attachment styles have been linked to caregivers that display insensitivity, inconsistency, or rejection. Possible factors that may contribute to an insecure parent-child attachment include inconsistent caregiver responsiveness, neglect or insensitive care, experiencing poverty, low marital satisfaction, an unplanned pregnancy, being a single parent, having a low income, psychological disorders or lack of support, residing in a challenging environment, parental stress or mental health problems, disruptions or transitions in the parent's life, abuse or trauma, unresolved parental attachment issues, and environmental stressors (Karakaş & Dağlı, 2019).

A study conducted by Bosmans and Borelli (2022) found that caregivers who inconsistently respond to a child's demands, occasionally meeting them but also failing to do so at times, can hinder the development of secure attachment. A study conducted by Cohen et al., (2016) examined a sample of 110 individuals aged 13 to 25 from New York City and Los Angeles. The study found that children may develop insecure attachment if they experience neglect or if their caregivers display emotional insensitivity and fail to accurately perceive or address their emotional signals. Additionally, parents who are dealing with high levels of stress, sadness, anxiety, or other mental health disorders may face challenges in consistently providing attentive and emotionally responsive care. Furthermore, substantial disruptions in one's life, such as divorce, separation, or frequent changes in caregivers, can potentially affect the development of a secure connection. The occurrence of abuse, neglect, or other traumatic experiences can significantly disrupt the formation of secure attachment, leading to the manifestation of insecure attachment patterns (Karakaş & Dağlı, 2019). Based on data from the United States Census Bureau, Wray (2015) discovered that parents who have unresolved attachment issues from their own childhood may encounter challenges in establishing stable bonds with their children. External stressors, such as economic difficulties, precarious housing, or communal violence, can impact the strength of the bonds between parents and children and result in insecure attachment. The prior studies mentioned above employed a sample size of individuals aged 13 to 25, along with a census. In contrast, the present study employed empirical research with learners and deputy principals to address the research gaps identified in the previous studies.

Piotrowska et al, (2015) identified certain elements associated with family dynamics that lead to the development of insecure attachment in children. These factors encompass inefficient parental discipline and supervision, parental conflict, a previous record of problematic

behaviour within the family, incorrect discipline, and insufficient monitoring. All of these factors have been linked to antisocial behaviours in children. In households that are divided as a result of divorce or separation, the probability of adequate supervision is reduced. This is primarily due to parents' physical absence or lack of motivation to closely supervise their children's activities, particularly when they display antisocial behaviour. The Development and Ecology of Antisocial Behaviour in Children and Adolescents highlights the importance of parental supervision, particularly in large households where children with antisocial tendencies may receive less individual attention (Dishion & Patterson, 2015). In addition, young individuals who have low self-assurance may be drawn to peers who display similar characteristics when choosing friends. This association pattern commonly arises in the early years of primary school, as the desire for acceptance by one's peer group and the need for a sense of belonging become important. A European study, which incorporated African immigrant youth in Dutch secondary schools, revealed that children who exhibit aggressive behaviour are significantly more likely to experience rejection from their peers. As a result, these socially marginalized individuals tend to form connections with one another (Hooijsma, 2020). In contrast, the present study incorporated deputy principals from three distinct secondary schools, while the prior study solely surveyed pupils from 169 separate classrooms.

Karakas and Dagli (2019) posited that multiple elements, including cultural values, gender roles, ethnic origin, education, unemployment rate, neighbourhood, family values, and the surrounding environment, have effect on the development of a child's attachment. Families with lesser levels of education and financial resources are less likely to understand the importance of parental involvement in child development, which has been demonstrated to hinder the appropriate emotional and social development of a child. Poverty-induced stress and low comprehension of child development, often associated with educational deficiency, can directly contribute to insecure attachment (Jensen, 2017). Poverty might limit a parent's ability to meet their child's requirements. Nyagwencha-Nyamweya's (2022) research in Kenya indicates that poverty can stem from different factors, such as abrupt events like the termination of a husband's job or persistent conditions such a shortage of economic resources. As a result, this could affect the quality of the attachment.

The existing disparity in poverty and access to opportunity among different racial groups in South Africa has been shaped by its historical circumstances. Marginalized groups had a persistent lack of sufficient land and resources, were denied opportunities for high-quality

education, and were compelled to resort to survival strategies (Sekhampu & Niyimbanira, 2013). Children growing up in poverty families face an elevated likelihood of encountering different stresses, which can result in insecure attachments within parent-child relationships and more challenging parenting situations (Eckstein-Madry, Piskernik & Ahnert, 2021). The aforementioned study consisted of a cohort of 60 children and their respective families residing in Germany. Out of this sample, 30 children were from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes, while 30 children from middle-class families with greater socioeconomic advantages were included as a comparison group. Moreover, when parents are unable to develop trustworthy and secure relationships, it can have a far-reaching effect that prevents families from obtaining the essential social and emotional support needed to end the cycle of poverty that extends across numerous generations (Wray, 2015). A study conducted by Labella et al. (2019) in the United States examined 245 African American parents and their 4- to 6-year-old children. The study revealed that several family stressors, including homelessness, parental unemployment, frequent violent arguments between parents, potential separation, prolonged parental illness, early loss of parent(s), and frequent changes in parental figures, can result in social, emotional, and psychological maladjustment in children. Moreover, there are proven signs of behavioural problems in learners that stem from problematic home circumstances. The previous study conducted by Labella et al., (2019) exclusively focused on children, excluding learners. However, the present study addressed this limitation by involving deputy principals and teens who were encountering challenges in the classroom.

A study conducted in the United States by Newman (2017) examined 10 mental health clinicians and found that parents' inability to form meaningful emotional bonds with their children was influenced by several factors, such as depression, substance abuse, poverty, troubled relationships with the other parent, mental illness, and violence. These attributes result in insecure behaviours and hinder positive results, impacting the child's growth during their crucial developmental stage. In Nyambega's (2022) research conducted in Kenya, 19 foster care centres in Njiru Ward were included. The study focused on children between the ages of 7 and 18, as well as their caregivers (house fathers and mothers) and 19 directors. The findings suggested that insecure attachment styles can be influenced by various factors. These factors include a parental background of antisocial behaviours, an unstable and chaotic home environment, a lack of effective parenting skills, the use of coercive and physical punishment, parental disruptions caused by divorce, death, or separation, and economic hardships resulting from poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, the findings indicated that challenging

circumstances can greatly endanger a person's mental and physical health. Young people who are exposed to this element are more likely to be susceptible to drunkenness, smoking, illicit drug usage, engaging in hazardous sexual behaviour, experiencing despair, and committing acts of violence against others and themselves (Whitesell, et al., 2013). Furthermore, the aforementioned study conducted by Nyambega (2022) focused specifically on children and directors, rather than deputy principals. Consequently, this study addressed research deficiencies by focusing on learners and deputy principals in secondary schools.

In 2005, the Nelson Mandela Foundation conducted a research study in South Africa that focused on children residing in rural areas. The study revealed that household and agricultural duties, along with long distances to schools, often resulted in limited time for education or frequent student absences. In addition, Dieltiens and Meny-Gibert (2012) discovered that the lack of secondary schools in close proximity and the costs associated with transportation were the primary factors influencing learners' choice to terminate their education. The study also revealed instances where learners were absent from school for certain periods of the academic term due to unpaid fees. The study previously evaluated utilized a sociological survey method, although it should be noted that this method did not qualify as empirical research. Consequently, the present study employed an empirical approach to gather data in order to address the deficiencies identified in prior studies.

Nobre, Nobre, and Valentini (2022) argue that poverty impedes learners' capacity to concentrate on academic assignments and has adverse consequences on their social interactions and self-image. The factors that contributed to this problem were a lack of funds to cover access expenses or fees, financial difficulties within the household, obligations to care for family members despite limited income , and the vulnerability of impoverished households to unexpected financial setbacks (Dieltiens & Meny-Gibert, 2012). Nevertheless, if the child's needs are only partially fulfilled, they will create an attachment that is less secure, such as anxious/avoidant, resistant, or disorganized attachments (Colmer, Rutherford & Murphy, 2011). Diverse factors can contribute to the development of insufficient social skills, ineffective regulation of emotions, negative behaviour, and/or limited control over impulses (Newman, 2017).

In a study conducted by Davids and Roman (2013) in South Africa, it was discovered that children raised in single-parent households get lower levels of parental monitoring and

supervision in comparison to children brought up in married households. Consequently, these children are generally considered to be vulnerable to negative outcomes. When comparing them, two-parent homes typically possess a superior socio-economic status and are regarded as preferable due to the individual contributions of each family member, leading to a more equitable allocation of household duties. Moreover, children raised in households with both parents generally have elevated levels of psychological and emotional well-being in comparison to children from non-traditional family structures. Single-parent homes sometimes face more vulnerability compared to two-parent families as they have restricted access to resources, which in turn has a significant impact on children (Pandya, 2023). In a separate study conducted in South Africa, it was shown that young individuals are more likely to emphasize exterior goals and aspirations. This tendency has the potential to have significant and wide-ranging effects in different areas of society. Extrinsic life goals can carry negative associations with regards to personal satisfaction, vitality, and positive feelings. Children raised in single-parent households may experience a subtle inclination to take on responsibility, cultivate independence, and engage in decision-making because of their parent's dual role (David & Roman, 2013).

Adesokan and Makura (2020) argue that the long-lasting consequences of apartheid in South Africa have led to a notable separation between job and family for several black South Africans. This phenomenon occurs because of the imperative for dads to depart from their families and relocate in pursuit of work opportunities, so putting school-aged children under the exclusive supervision of their moms. Ogbugo-Ololube (2016) conducted a study in Nigerian secondary schools, which revealed a significant association between the socioeconomic and educational background of parents, income levels, family size, and the academic and social success of kids. Education is crucial for moulding persons' character and acts as a vital method of conveying societal and familial values. Mothers with higher socio-economic status are more likely to provide increased financial assistance to their children. Furthermore, they devote their time to offering aid, direction, and psychological solace to their children as necessary. The research carried out by Adesokan and Makura (2020) in the Free State, South Africa, found that maternal education has a substantial and enduring influence on the cognitive and behavioural outcomes of children. Understanding and efficiently addressing the factors that contribute to insecure attachment patterns is crucial for providing appropriate support and fostering strong and stable attachment relationships.

Furthermore, additional research undertaken in South Africa has investigated the various elements that contribute to the development of insecure attachment patterns. According to a study conducted by Schuitmaker, Basson, and Kruger (2023), individuals living in poor African countries are more likely to develop insecure attachment styles due to the combined influence of socio-economic risk factors. The study included a total of 233 undergraduate learners from a South African institution who had experienced a stressful event. The findings suggested a significant correlation between persons exhibiting an anxious attachment style and experiencing reduced levels of post-traumatic growth. Furthermore, those with an avoidant attachment style had a significant reluctance to engage in post-traumatic healing through interpersonal relationships, in contrast to other aspects of post-traumatic growth.

Furthermore, a further investigation carried out in South Africa (Velotti, D'Aguanno, de Campora, et al., 2016) yielded additional proof that attachment anxiety and avoidance were both linked to emotional nonacceptance and a deficiency in emotional clarity. Moreover, the study revealed that the existence of attachment anxiety is associated with difficulties in controlling impulsive behaviour and having restricted access to efficient strategies for regulating emotions. However, connection avoidance was especially correlated with a deficiency in emotional awareness. Specifically, research has shown that attachment anxiety is associated with greater difficulties in women, but not men, in effectively pursuing goals when feeling discomfort. There were 229 participants in the study who completed the Experiences in Close Relationship–Revised scale and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Velotti, D'Aguanno, de Campora, et al., 2016). The previous studies mentioned involved graduate participants, but they did not specifically examine tenth-grade pupils. This current study, however, addresses this gap in research by focusing on tenth-grade learners.

Furthermore, a research investigation was conducted on a sample of 135 elementary school learners and their caregivers in Mankweng, in Polokwane, South Africa. The study aimed to evaluate the predictive capacity of the avoidance and anxiety attachment characteristics in relation to problem behaviours. A correlation was discovered between the internalizing issue behaviours exhibited by learners and their attachment qualities, including avoidance and, to some extent, anxiety. The study revealed that numerous behavioral difficulties found at school can be ascribed to domestic circumstances, such as parental separation, unemployment, and a scarcity of caregivers (Mashegoane & Ramoloto, 2016). The previous study under review focused solely on learners and guardians from primary schools as participants. However, it did

not specifically target learners in grade 10 or deputy principals. This current study aims to investigate these specific groups in order to address a gap in the existing data.

Unemployment and poor household income in South Africa have a negative effect on the development of children, due to socioeconomic issues. Rawatlal, Pillay, and Kliewer (2015) examined the associations of financial disadvantage, family structure, and other indicators of the caregiver-adolescent relationship and family functioning in their research. The study sample size comprised one maternal caregiver and one teenager from each family, with a specific focus on adolescents in Grade 7 and Grade 10. The findings reported a positive correlation between higher household incomes and lower levels of apprehensive attachment in relationships. The only factor that predicted felt support from the mother in the model was maternal education. Children whose mothers with higher levels of education reported higher levels of perceived support and lower levels of fear. The findings yielded valuable insights regarding the correlations between secure and insecure attachment and familial interactions (Rawatlal, Pillay & Kliewer, 2015). The reviewed study above included maternal caregivers and one teenager, but the present study used a more comprehensive approach by additionally including deputy principals.

The next section provides a literature review on social competence as a secondary topic in this research study.

2.9 SOCIAL COMPETENCE: MEANING & BACKGROUND

As stated in a review paper, social competence refers to an individual's ability to effectively interact and communicate with others in social situations. This involves combining social skills, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal communication (Flannery & Smith, 2017). Mastery of social skills is crucial in all aspects of life, including interpersonal relationships, work settings, and community involvement. Developing social skills can lead to better communication, increased satisfaction in relationships, and improved overall well-being. Social competence is the ability to effectively handle social connections. Social competence refers to the capacity to effectively build and maintain positive relationships with others, as well as to skilfully navigate various social situations. Social competence is the result of a wide range of cognitive abilities, emotional processes, behavioural skills, social awareness, and personal and cultural values that are relevant to interpersonal relationships. This is because social interaction is complex and requires a combination of these factors (Berg et al., 2017). The child's social

competence is determined by their approach motivation in social situations and is seen by their keen interest in social activities.

Social competence refers to the capacity to connect and integrate with others in an effective manner, while demonstrating social responsibility and genuine concern for their well-being. According to Noble and McGrath (2011), social competence has a vital function in cultivating interpersonal peace and advancing the general well-being of organizations. Social competence emerges from the propensity to actively engage in social interactions with peers, motivated by a desire for favourable results and a lack of reluctance towards such situations. A study conducted by Pellegrini and Blatchford (2014) found that schools have a vital role in promoting children's social connections by bringing together children of similar ages, which allows for the creation of peer groups that are segregated by gender and age.

Parents and caregivers can enhance the development of social competence in children by continuously providing positive feedback and actively engaging in interactions with them. Inadequate cultivation of children's social skills and emotional regulation can result in enduring repercussions that endure throughout their entire lifespan (Newman, 2017). Developing social skills is a major goal of socialization in Western societies. Social competence is considered a crucial indicator of social maturity and success, whereas the lack of active social involvement and initiative is viewed as maladaptive. Nevertheless, even though self-regulation and control are encouraged, the cultural focus on individual decision-making and freedom requires socialization agents to help children develop the skill of balancing their own desires with the needs of others (Martin & McLellan, 2013).

Children who actively participate in social interactions are regarded as socially skilled by both their peers and adults. Friendly behaviour that includes assertiveness and self-expression is considered advantageous in social encounters among individualistic cultures. According to Gonzales, (2022), shows that children who are sociable tend to have higher social standing among their peers and are more likely to succeed in social and emotional aspects. Nevertheless, it is vital to guarantee that children are given abundant opportunities to interact with the social milieu and confront situations that necessitate them to make choices or formulate solutions to address them. As professionals in early childhood, our primary duty is to provide numerous opportunities and support experiences that empower children to develop independence and self-sufficiency (Gonzales, 2022). The next section examines many elements of social competence.

2.10 COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Social competence consists of various distinct elements that can be developed and improved with the help of favourable surroundings, enriching experiences, and nurturing individuals (Junge, et al., 2020). Gonzale (2022) categorizes several components, encompassing social values, positive self-identity, interpersonal skills, self-regulation, planning and decision making, emotional intelligence, social skills, empathy, adaptability, communication skills, problem-solving and conflict resolution, building and maintaining relationships, and cultural competence. Interpersonal skills are essential behavioural competencies employed in engaging and establishing connections with people, primarily on an individual basis (Øzerk, Özerk & Silveira-Zaldivar, 2021).

A study conducted with eight heads of departments in Turkish secondary schools found that social competence is closely linked to emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence involves the capacity to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions, while also being attuned to the emotions of others (Goleman, 2006 as cited in Beytekin, 2021). Emotional intelligence is crucial for the establishment and maintenance of significant relationships. Empathy is the ability to understand and feel the feelings of other people. People with high social skills are often known for their capacity to empathize, which allows them to form meaningful connections with people and successfully address their needs and emotions (Ahsan, 2023). Individuals who possess social competence exhibit a diverse range of social skills that enable them to effectively and appropriately interact with others in meaningful relationships. The skills included in this list are active listening, verbal communication, nonverbal communication, conflict resolution, and the ability to interpret social cues.

Individuals with high social competence excel in resolving conflicts and effectively handling interpersonal difficulties. According to Spitzberg and Cupach (2012), those with high social competence have the ability to skilfully handle conflicts by seeking solutions that benefit all parties involved. Social competence refers to the ability to establish, develop, and sustain positive interpersonal relationships. This involves developing a network of social connections and maintaining important interactions for a long duration. Based on a study conducted with 550 parents of children aged 3-12 in Norway, it was shown that in an increasingly diverse environment, possessing social competence necessitates both cultural sensitivity and

knowledge (Hukkelberg & Ogden, 2020). This involves understanding and appreciating cultural differences and adjusting one's behaviour to promote inclusivity and show respect for different perspectives.

A study conducted in Spain including 52 children and 37 children with usual development found that persons who have social competence are able to adjust and alter their behaviour to fit different social situations (Rosello, et al., 2020). They have the ability to understand the social situation and adjust their communication style and behaviour accordingly. A study conducted in Indonesia involving 315 college students found that effective communication is a crucial aspect of social competence. This includes not only the ability to express one's thoughts clearly, but also to understand and interpret the ideas conveyed by others (Menggo, Pramesti, & Krismayani, 2023). Proficient communicators possess mastery in both verbal and nonverbal communication. The new study aimed to address the limitations of prior research by examining a more extensive sample of middle teenage learners, instructors, and principals. Prior studies focused on younger learners.
The next section provides a comprehensive analysis of the importance of social competence in connection to this study.

2.11 IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Social competence is highly important since it encompasses the qualities that enable youngsters to become proficient and capable individuals in the real world. The South African National Curriculum Framework of (2015), aims to recognize early children as capable individuals who actively participate in their own learning. It also strives to create socially and culturally aware environments for young children. Thus, it can be inferred that the ultimate objective of education is to foster proficiency in its recipients. It is crucial for youngsters to possess a strong and optimistic self-perception in order to thrive in their personal lives and future professional endeavors. According to a Turkish study performed in with 207 Junior Secondary School learners, social competence enables children to acquire positive self-identity, social values, interpersonal skills, self-regulation, positive relationships, effective communication, conflict resolution, academic success, career advancement, emotional well-being, adaptability, peer acceptance, cultural competence, life satisfaction, resilience, and healthy development (Ahmed, Hamzah & Abdullah, 2020).

Chernyshenko, Kankaraš, and Drasgow (2018) conducted a global survey that evaluated the social competence of 10- and 15-year-old learners in various cities and countries. They found that social competence is a highly beneficial quality that improves personal well-being, promotes strong interpersonal relationships, and contributes to success in multiple aspects of life. Social competence is crucial in several aspects of an individual's life, as it plays a major role in attaining personal, intellectual, and professional achievements. Social competence enables individuals to effectively initiate and maintain positive contacts with others. Strong interpersonal skills improve the quality of personal relationships, friendships, and support systems. A study conducted in the United Kingdom by Heverly-Fitt et al., (2016) found that children who have excellent interpersonal skills are able to engage effectively and establish positive relationships with their classmates and persons in their immediate surroundings.

Social competence equips individuals with the essential skills to effectively tackle and resolve difficulties in a constructive and fruitful manner (Paolini, 2020). Proficiency in conflict resolution and achieving mutually acceptable outcomes is crucial in both personal and professional settings. Socially competent individuals exhibit a high level of skill in communication, including the ability to express ideas clearly, actively listen, and accurately interpret both verbal and nonverbal cues. Learners that excel academically typically demonstrate robust collaborative skills, effective communication with peers and instructors, and the capacity to engage in constructive social relationships (Khalid et al., 2023). Proficiency in social skills is essential for attaining professional success in one's work. The skill set includes advanced networking, collaboration, leadership, and communication talents, all highly valued by companies.

Individuals with robust social skills typically have a heightened sense of emotional well-being. Individuals have the capacity to effectively navigate social challenges, form supportive connections, and skilfully manage stress and emotions. The sample for this study comprised 149 Spanish university learners (Morales-Rodríguez, et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the current study investigated middle adolescent learners, teachers, and principals in order to address the existing research deficiencies. Developing social competence allows children to skilfully regulate their emotions and exhibit positive social skills. This allows individuals to participate in selfless deeds without expecting anything in return, and, more importantly, to exhibit independence in decision-making. Individuals with robust social skills are more adept at adapting and flourishing in diverse social environments. They have the capacity to adjust their

conduct and communication style based on the particular conditions, hence fostering positive interactions in many environments. Improved social skills promote more acceptance and integration among peers. Individuals with proficient social skills are often highly respected and admired by their peers, leading to a sense of belonging and approval (Rajendran, Athira & Elavarasi, 2020).

Social competence involves possessing the capacity to exhibit cultural sensitivity and awareness. Individuals with proficient social skills can adeptly engage and adjust in diverse cultural settings, fostering inclusivity and cultivating mutual understanding (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2021). Positive social contacts and relationships have a crucial role in determining an individual's overall life satisfaction. People with strong interpersonal skills often find it helpful to have a support structure that assists them in handling challenges and bouncing back from setbacks. Establishing strong social relationships enhances one's self-perception and boosts self-esteem. People with high social skills are more likely to face unexpected situations with confidence (Eljo & Nadaf, 2020). The assessment was conducted on a sample of 103 adolescents in India. To summarize, social competence allows children to develop emotional intelligence, which helps them recognize and classify their own emotions, support others around them, and succeed in social situations. Social competence is crucial for promoting a well-rounded socio-emotional development, allowing individuals to navigate social interactions successfully (Seni, 2020).
The next section examines the social skills deficiency in social competence.

2.12 SOCIAL INCOMPETENCE: SOCIAL SKILLS DEFICIT

Social incompetence is characterized by an individual's struggle to properly navigate and interact with others in social settings (Abele, et al., 2021). It might appear as difficulties in several areas of social functioning, communication, and developing relationships. Social incompetence can manifest in various domains, including interpersonal connections, professional environments, and communal situations. Del Prette and Del Prette (2021) posit that social competence is not a fixed trait but rather varies along a continuum and additionally, social difficulties can be impacted by a range of elements, such as personal distinctions, stages of development, and environmental influences.

Common indicators and factors of social incompetence include challenges in establishing and sustaining relationships, a tendency to avoid or escalate conflicts, social anxiety, difficulty initiating social interactions, inappropriate social behaviour, poor communication skills, inability to understand social situations, limited empathy, ineffective conflict resolution, difficulties in resolving conflicts in a constructive and assertive manner, and social isolation (Rubin & Chronis-Tuscano, 2021). Social incompetence is evident when individuals have difficulties or deficiencies in their social skills, which are the abilities to successfully navigate and engage with people in social settings (Abele, et al., 2021). Impairments in social skills can have a significant influence on multiple facets of communication and the establishment of relationships. The severity of social skills deficits can vary and they may be linked to different disorders, such as social anxiety and other developmental difficulties (Cheng, Lei & DiPerna, 2023).

According to Prieur, Jensen and Nielsen, (2020) study in South Africa, the common social skills deficits associated with social incompetence include: unclear expression of thoughts and ideas, inadequate maintenance of eye contact during conversations, difficulties in using appropriate tone, pitch, and volume in speech, lack of awareness or difficulty in interpreting nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language, inappropriate use of personal space or difficulties understanding personal boundaries, challenges in initiating conversations or approaching others in social situations, and difficulties in sustaining a conversation by contributing appropriately and responding to others. Some individuals struggle with comprehending and reacting to others' feelings, have trouble displaying authentic empathy or sympathy towards others' experiences, face obstacles in effectively and confidently resolving conflicts, and may either avoid or intensify confrontations (Korucu, et al., 2022).
This reviewed study above included 932 preschool children their parents, and their teachers in the United States, but it did not include learners in secondary schools. Therefore, learners from secondary schools and deputy principals participated in the current study in order to fill in the gaps in previous research.

Additionally, deficiencies in social skills encompass an inability to comprehend situations from someone else's standpoint, difficulties in acknowledging and adjusting to diverse perspectives, a restricted capacity to proactively engage in social scenarios, such as participating in group activities or initiating social plans, difficulties in establishing and sustaining friendships, engaging in behaviours that may be interpreted as socially inappropriate or intrusive, limited

comprehension of social norms and expectations, challenges in navigating group interactions, including comprehending social hierarchies and adapting to evolving group dynamics, and difficulties in participating in group activities or projects (Cheng, Lei & DiPerna, 2023). The social competence of children who have a secure attachment style is discussed in the next section.

2. 13 SOCIAL COMPETENCES OF LEARNERS WITH SECURE ATTACHMENT STYLE

Bowlby (1969) proposed that children who form attachments to their caregivers have the capacity to form enduring socio-emotional bonds. Establishing safe relationships with caregivers is essential for promoting emotional regulation and establishing the foundation for a child's long-term social and emotional growth (Schmitt et al., 2018). The study included a total of 75 children who were attending preschool in 10 different classrooms across 5 sites in the Midwestern region of the United States. Children's different types of attachments can lead to specific issues with internalization and have diverse impacts on their development. According to the research conducted by Schmitt et al., (2018), children who have secure attachments tend to form healthy relationships with their peers, engage in imaginative play, and exhibit numerous positive signs of mental well-being.

Secure connection throughout early infancy is associated with positive developmental outcomes, such as the development of social competence. The presence of secure attachments in children signifies the development of a strong and self-assured emotional bond with their primary caregivers (Howe & Betts, 2023). The timely establishment of this foundation has implications for their social and emotional development, including their capacity to engage proficiently with others. It is important to recognize that while having a stable attachment is a solid foundation for social competence, individuals have the ability to continue developing and enhancing their social skills throughout their whole lives. The development of social competence in individuals with secure attachments is shaped by favorable social encounters, nurturing environments, and continual social education (Sørlie, Hagen & Nordahl, 2021). This study investigated the progression of social skills in a group of typically developing children in Norway, from 4th to 7th grade. It also explored how factors such as child gender and school-related factors influenced the degree and evolution of these social abilities. The study collected data at five different time points to track the development of social skills.

Individuals who have stable attachment patterns generally have a positive self-image and a strong sense of self-worth. Developing a strong self-esteem is essential for building successful social relationships, since it provides individuals with a feeling of confidence and assurance (Fung, 2023). A total of 103 Hong Kong kindergarten children and their teachers were involved in this study. Individuals with a stable attachment style are more likely to develop social resilience, which allows them to successfully bounce back from social challenges and setbacks. Having attachment figures present provides a secure base, allowing individuals to explore and engage with others in the social realm with confidence. Cultivating a strong and reliable connection fosters the growth of effective communication abilities.

The present study, in contrast to the aforementioned study that just focused on preschool-aged children, encompassed learners from secondary schools. This was done to examine the intricacies of dealing with adolescents and to address the deficiencies in the above reviewed research by Fung (2023).

Sharbatdaran and Awan (2023) found that individuals who have received attentive and nurturing care are more likely to have well-developed communication skills. This includes the ability to effectively express their thoughts and emotions, as well as understand and respond to the messages of others. People who have secure attachment types often develop a strong ability to empathize with others. They have the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others, which is a crucial part of social competence. Having the ability to understand and consider the perspectives of others improves positive and cooperative social interactions. Secure attachment is linked to the regulation of emotions. In addition, Gkintoni, Halkiopoulos, Dimakos, and Nikolaou (2023) conducted a systematic review to analyse the correlation between emotional intelligence and its effects on children and teachers. They achieved this by combining several pertinent research findings. This study involves a thorough examination undertaken from 2016 to 2023, in which a total of 64 papers were reviewed. The study's findings suggest that persons with solid attachments have improved capacities to regulate their emotions, which is essential for effectively navigating social relationships.

Although the above reviewed study employed a systematic review methodology, the research done was not empirical. Consequently, the present study employed an empirical strategy to collect data, effectively addressing research limitations in the accepted methodology.

As previously determined, the establishment of secure attachment forms the basis for the development of strong and steady interpersonal relationships. Individuals with stable attachments are more likely to trust others, form positive connections, and engage in mutually advantageous partnerships. Moreover, persons with a secure attachment style have strong problem-solving skills and possess a firm foundation of confidence that enables them to confidently and flexibly address social challenges, actively seeking effective solutions. According to a study conducted by Lovat et al., (2023) in South Africa, learners who have a secure attachment are more likely to explore their social surroundings with curiosity and confidence. This exploration helps to develop interpersonal skills and the ability to adapt to different social environments.

Over the years, there has been less research undertaken on social competence in Africa. However, there are notable studies that have made significant contributions to this research topic. In a classical study undertaken by Pillay (2003), the levels of social maturity in children with mental retardation residing in both rural and urban regions were assessed. The study specifically focused on children with an IQ ranging from 40 to 70 points. An investigation was conducted to examine the extent of the discrepancy between individuals' intelligence quotients (IQ) and their social quotients (SQ). Individuals residing in rural areas exhibited a much higher ratio of social quotient (SQ) to intelligence quotient (IQ) in comparison to urban dwellers. Additionally, there was a positive association between age and this ratio. Young children residing in rural regions are anticipated to engage in domestic and communal responsibilities from an early stage. These responsibilities encompass tasks like as collecting water and firewood, tending to livestock, and engaging in other activities that are less common among youngsters residing in urban settings. The data support the concept that children with mental impairment can enhance their social competence, even in disadvantaged locations, if they are given appropriate opportunity. It is conceivable that this ability is potentially even more extensive than that of youngsters who are brought up in less challenging circumstances.

The study done in 2004 aimed to assess the social competence of 371 Zimbabwean learners attending racially and ethnically diverse schools, taking into account factors such as race, ethnicity, and gender (Mpofu, Thomas & Chan, 2004). Approximately 42 percent of the children were of African descent, whereas 58 percent were of European descent. The study's findings revealed that learners' social competence is multifaceted, influenced by gender, and subject to varying perceptions from both teachers and peers on an individual basis. The

categories of peer evaluations of social responsibility and instructor ratings of social behaviour and social responsibility were identified as the primary areas where consistent differences in social competence were seen. The categories encompassed race/ethnicity and gender classifications. In postcolonial or historically privileged environments, minorities from a dominant culture may have higher social standing compared to their peers from the majority culture, depending on race, ethnicity, and gender (Mpofu, Thomas & Chan, 2004). The present study considered not just learners, like the previous study, but also instructors and deputy principals to address the deficiencies identified in prior research. The next section will address the social ineptitude exhibited by youngsters with an insecure attachment style.

2.14 SOCIAL INCOMPETENCE OF LEARNERS WITH INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLES

According to Park and Schepp (2015), vulnerability is the condition of being prone to stress and anxiety, which can negatively impact a person's physical, mental, and social health. Therefore, many previous studies have focused on children from families where parents experience both depression and drinking. These researches consistently show a connection between parental alcohol misuse and negative social outcomes in these children. Studies have shown that children of adults with alcoholism have a higher likelihood of experiencing externalizing problems, such as hyperactivity and aggressiveness, as well as internalizing difficulties, such as low self-esteem and increased feelings of despair (Park & Schepp, 2015). According to Libusi's (2020) research conducted in Kenya, using a longitudinal survey of 428 families with two children aged 12-17 years, it was found that families with alcohol dependency often create a harmful and chaotic home environment. This environment is characterized by unhappy parents, increased levels of antisocial behaviour, and occurrences of domestic violence. The aforementioned traits can directly or indirectly lead to the development of externalizing tendencies in children from households with alcoholic family members.

Parentification is a common phenomenon in South African townships, when children take on adult responsibilities due to their parents' insufficient functioning, such as in cases of parental alcoholism (Masiran, et al., 2023). The concept refers to the shift of responsibilities within a family, namely among young individuals who take on parental tasks such as domestic chores and looking after younger siblings. Offspring of individuals with alcohol dependency bear the responsibility of completing parental duties within their houses (Libusi, 2020). The obligations

include taking care of parents and siblings who have alcohol addiction, which can have negative impacts on their emotional and social development, such as reduced self-esteem, isolation from social activities, and emotional turmoil (Park & Schepp, 2015).

Fernandes et al., (2020) found that early childhood insecure attachment can have wide-ranging effects on an individual's social competence, impacting various aspects of their social and emotional development. This study employed a multi-method approach to examine the relationship between direct observation at home at age 3, as measured by the Attachment Behaviour Q-sort, and social competence assessed two years later in classrooms of 5-year-olds. Social competence was evaluated using a set of seven measurement indicators derived from the Hierarchical Model of Social Competence. Prompt recognition and intervention can have a substantial effect on the cultivation of socially adept and resilient abilities in learners with insecure attachment. Insecurely attached learners exhibit social incompetence, which is characterized by several hurdles. These learners may struggle to trust others during social interactions. They may have experienced inconsistent caregiving, leading to difficulties in relying on others for help and forming meaningful relationships, and they may also have heightened anxiety in social situations. Finally, those who feel anxious about being rejected or abandoned may struggle to engage with their peers or form positive relationships (Sprenger, 2020). The study included middle school learners, life skills teacher, and deputy principals as participants, aiming to address the research gaps identified in the previous study.

Individuals who have insecure attachment styles, particularly those with anxious-avoidant attachments, may exhibit a strong inclination to completely avoid social interactions. This avoidance is driven by their fear of rejection or disappointment, which can hinder the development of their social skills. This survey, conducted from January to May 2019, involved 1810 Lebanese high-school learners aged 12-18 in a cross-sectional analysis. Learners who have insecure attachment may face difficulties in openly expressing their needs and emotions. They may feel anxious about receiving negative responses or lack knowledge of effective ways to express their emotions. These challenges can impede their ability to form meaningful relationships with others (Maalouf, 2022). The above reviewed study exclusively examined high school pupils, but the new study aimed to address the deficiencies in prior research by include both instructors and deputy administrators.

At times, individuals with insecure attachments may face challenges when it comes to showing empathy and understanding others' perspectives. Some individuals with insecure attachment styles may excessively seek reassurance and approval from others, relying on external sources to feel secure (Evraire, Dozois & Wilde, 2022). Insufficient establishment of a secure base during initial attachment experiences can have a detrimental effect on individuals' ability to navigate social demands (Girme, et al., 2021).

In a study conducted by Alfred and Hillar (2021) in Ghana, it was shown that the majority of youths displayed moderate levels of social competence in social contexts. Data collection was conducted only through the use of a questionnaire, employing a descriptive survey design. The results revealed a significant difference in the level of social competence among youths living in urban, semi-urban, and rural areas. The above reviewed study solely utilized questionnaires and surveys for data collection, it lacked qualitative data. Thus, the current study employed semi-structured interviews to provide in-depth findings as a means to address the research gaps identified in the earlier study.

Overall, there is a direct correlation between callous-unemotional traits and familial competence with bullying, with the former having a favourable impact and the latter having a negative impact. The study conducted by Nwafor, Ibeagha, Anazonwu, and Obi-Nwosu (2020) examined the relationship between bullying and family competence among 256 South African senior high school learners aged 14 to 16. The study found that the impact of family competence on bullying, mediated by callousness and lack of emotion, was significant. The above reviewed study was quantitative in nature, and it lacked qualitative aspects to provide detailed in-depth findings. Thus, the present study adopted a qualitative methodology to fill this research gap.
The next section presents literature review on the degree to which teacher training programs contribute to the establishment of secure attachments in educational institutions.

2.15 EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMMES SUPPORT SECURE ATTACHMENT IN SCHOOLS

The extent to which teacher training programs assist the development of stable attachment in schools can vary greatly based on factors like as the curriculum, emphasis on social-emotional learning, and allocation of resources towards attachment theory. Noddings (2015) argues that the primary obligation of schools is to offer nurturing care for children. Asserting that schools

should exclusively prioritize academic goals is inherently wrong, as children are unable to effectively participate in academic education without obtaining adequate care. The teacher's ability to understand learners' emotions illustrates the provision of emotional support and the concept of emotional comprehension (Gkonou, & Mercer, 2017). This study conducted in Ireland involved a total of 4 classroom teachers, 60 learners, the parents of the children, and four special education teachers. Castro and Pereira (2019) argue that teachers should actively seek to cultivate more intimacy and comprehension in their interactions. The reviewed study above only focused on parents and learners who were enrolled in secondary schools. Thus, the present study addressed research deficiencies in the previous literature by focusing specifically on deputy principals in secondary schools.

Garcia-Rodriguez, Redín and Abaitua (2023) conducted a review paper which found that the effectiveness of teacher training programs in promoting secure attachment in schools is influenced by several factors. These factors include the teachers' understanding of attachment theory, their ability to implement practical techniques for building relationships, their cultural proficiency, their use of trauma-informed approaches, their communication skills, their reflective practices, their continuous professional development, and the support provided by the institution. By fostering collaboration between schools and teacher education programs, educators can be effectively prepared to create secure and supportive learning environments (Gimbert, et al., 2023). Teacher training programs that explicitly incorporate social-emotional learning components are more likely to recognize the need of creating secure connections. These programs may cover topics such as emotional intelligence, cultivating relationships, and creating a supportive school environment (Hayashi, et al., 2022; McCall, et al., 2023).

Furthermore, research suggests that providing teachers with training improves their understanding of attachment theory, specifically its impact on children' socio-emotional development. Educators must recognize the influence of early attachment experiences on children's behavior, interpersonal relationships, and academic advancement (Garcia-Rodriguez, Redín & Abaitua, 2023; Harlow, 2021). Furthermore, teacher training offers efficient methods for developing and enhancing partnerships. Therefore, training programs should offer educators practical strategies for fostering positive relationships with learners. This involves understanding and attending to children's emotional needs, creating a secure and trustworthy school environment, and promoting a sense of inclusivity.

In addition, research indicate that teacher training promotes cultural competence and sensitivity. Hence, it is imperative for teachers to undergo training that emphasizes cultural competence and a profound understanding of diverse attachment styles (Shockley & Krakaur, 2021). Furthermore, developing proficient communication with kids and their families is crucial for cultivating a robust and enduring connection. Training programs should pay priority to the importance of clear, positive, and consistent communication, as well as promoting collaboration with parents and caregivers to strengthen the attachment bond (Badea & Suditu, 2024). Furthermore, programs that encourage educators to engage in self-reflective practices and develop self-awareness can enhance their ability to recognize and respond to learners' emotional needs. Teachers can improve their understanding by closely observing learners' behaviour and actively participating in reflective discussions (Mumford & Dikilitaş, 2020).

Continual professional development is essential for instructors to augment their understanding of attachment and better their instructional approaches (Zhang, Admiraal & Saab, 2021). Continuing education can empower instructors to stay informed about the latest research and evidence-based methods for promoting secure bonding. Teacher training programs that incorporate practical components, such as classroom observations, internships, or student teaching, provide aspiring teachers with opportunities to apply attachment-related theories and approaches in real-world scenarios. The extent to which teacher training programs support the formation of secure attachment is also dependent on the school's commitment to fostering socio-emotional growth. It is crucial for schools and education systems to prioritize and offer essential assistance to teachers in implementing practices that are guided by attachment theory (Ydo, 2020).

According to a study conducted by Du Plessis and Mestry (2019), South African educators lack adequate training to effectively address difficult situations in schools, such as supporting learners who experience insecurity, limited access to resources, and lack of parental involvement. As a result, schools face difficulties in offering the required assistance and promoting a sense of secure connection among pupils. This study demonstrated that there are many complexities and interconnectedness of the difficulties faced by instructors in rural schools in South Africa. The study utilized qualitative research methodologies within the interpretivist paradigm to examine the viewpoints and encounters of teachers in rural schools in White River, situated in the Mpumalanga province. The findings revealed that a significant number of these educational institutions are deficient in fundamental facilities such as water,

sanitation, and electricity. Furthermore, the classrooms are in a state of extreme disrepair. Obstacles to achieving successful education encompass parental apathy, insufficient government funding, restricted resources, unprepared educators, and the practice of teaching multiple grades simultaneously (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).
The aforementioned study focused on teachers as participants, but did not include other participants such as deputy principals and learners which would have made the findings rich. This present study, however, addresses this gap in research by investigating these additional groups.

Schulze and Steyn (2007) conducted a separate analysis which revealed that obstacles to school efficiency were observed in the professional experiences of secondary school instructors in South Africa. The investigation was conducted experimentally, using a questionnaire that consisted of 19 potential stressors. 987 instructors from many racial groups and provinces around the country completed this questionnaire. The study found that educators with 6 to 15 years of experience and aged between 36 and 45 had significant variations from other educators in some areas of concern. A prevalent characteristic among these educators was the lack of sufficient training to effectively address daily obstacles and suboptimal school conditions. The reviewed study above exclusively sampled instructors as participants, without including any other participants for data triangulation. To address the deficiencies in the above reviewed research, the present study conducted interviews with learners and deputy principals to analyse the challenges they encounter.

In another related study, Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) discovered that the educational system in South Africa is defective because of teachers who are not meeting expectations, insufficient dedication to work, absence of support from the community and parents, inadequate oversight from education authorities, lack of support for teachers, and limited levels of responsibility.

Potgieter-Groot, Visser, and Lubbe-de Beer (2012) discovered that a considerable proportion of educators in mainstream education lack sufficient training to effectively cater to the requirements of learners encountering emotional and behavioural difficulties. This study outlined the process of developing an in-service training program for instructors who come across learners with emotional and behavioural challenges in their educational environments. The study utilized an action research methodology including 47 educators from two primary

schools in South Africa. Teachers have seen that using efficient classroom management strategies significantly influences the conduct of pupils who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties. The training had a significant influence on the attitudes of teachers, the dynamics between teachers and learners, the conduct of learners, and the overall structure of the school. In order to address the research deficiencies in the current body of literature, the present study was carried out in three secondary schools, encompassing both learners and deputy principals. The previous study had a limitation in that it only included teachers from two elementary schools, which resulted in gaps in the data.

Freeman et al, (2014) performed study to assess the extent to which pre-service and in-service teacher-training programs adequately prepare instructors to address the social concerns that children encounter. The study utilized qualitative methodologies. The study sample was restricted to four public high schools in Cape Town. The group comprised three newly accredited teachers and one experienced teacher. The results suggested that teachers dealt with learners' social concerns by engaging in a trial-and-error approach, without any deliberate planning in identifying kids who were facing social problems. The preservice teacher training programmes were ineffective in equipping instructors with the requisite skills to address the social concerns faced by pupils. Although instructors received some form of training at schools, most deemed the program to be inadequate in providing them with any benefits. The study reviewed above only included instructors as participants, excluding other stakeholders who could have contributed to data triangulation and potentially enhanced the findings. To address the research inadequacies, the present study further examined the contributions provided by principals and learners, hence expanding the research scope.

The concluding portion analysed the ongoing worldwide and local debates on the transformation of schools into secure havens for all children.

2.16 GLOBAL & LOCAL DEBATES OF HOW SCHOOLS COULD BE SECURE BASE FOR ALL LEARNERS

Children allocate a significant amount of their life to attending school, where they have valuable opportunities to form solid, dependable, and safe relationships with adults. These interactions have the potential to facilitate the development of a favourable self-perception in children, ultimately enhancing their self-esteem and confidence, as long as the school provides suitable

assistance (Ubha & Cahill, 2014). The school environment has the capacity to significantly influence a child's emotional well-being, ability to adapt and recover from challenges, cognitive growth, social growth, and engagement in school. Gkonou, & Mercer, (2017) argues that educators have a duty to recognize their role in restoring secure attachment and assisting learners in changing related behaviours. Furthermore, the significance of schools in optimizing the capabilities of each learners and creating strategies to support learners who exhibit externalizing behaviours that disturb the school environment. Schools can choose to include curriculum elements or create specific settings that prioritize the development of personal freedom through collaborative efforts. Ogbomosho (2017) argues that the Ministry of Education is accountable for the welfare and progress of individuals, and should exhibit a resolute commitment to improving the growth of pupils. The study recommended the implementation of intervention programs that specifically target both teachers and learners in schools. In addition, a university's teacher education curriculum, which covers both general and special education, should include extensive understanding and skill in identifying antisocial behaviour and its long-lasting effects. Schools may support learners in developing the ability to regulate their emotions, promote self-reliance, and nurture meaningful connections in their relationships with others - all of which are important for developing secure attachments in the future.

Unfortunately, many educational institutions do not dedicate enough time to courses on child development. Castro and Pereira (2019) found that learners with anxious attachment frequently have a feeling of being misunderstood by their teachers. They have a pessimistic outlook and find it difficult to trust that others truly have concern for them. This requires carefulness in the domain of education. Multiple studies have shown that therapy targeting the many factors contributing to children's difficulties have been effective (Ubha & Cahill, 2014). Meddling in the lives of children might provide challenges due to the ever-evolving conditions. Marsh, & Farrell, (2015) conducted a study that provides a conceptual basis highlighting the importance of relationships in all areas of decision-making in schools, including curriculum, instruction, and organizational design. Marsh, & Farrell, (2015), argued that subject matter lacks the ability to maintain itself. In nearly all cases, prior knowledge or understanding is necessary before engaging with a subject matter, unless it is an exceedingly rare circumstance. A comprehensive plan may create a positive atmosphere throughout the entire school, with a particular focus on developing principles, attitude, and promoting trust, support, and guidance for children (Ubha & Cahill, 2014). According to Maluleke (2021), creating a secure foundation for kids with low

self-assurance in schools involves fostering a supportive and caring environment that addresses their emotional needs and sets the groundwork for their social and academic development. Interventions such as social skills training, counselling, and support from educators, mental health professionals, and peers can be beneficial in addressing social ineptitude and promoting social development.

Schiavon, et al., (2020) proposed that schools can utilize many ways to develop a solid basis for pupils who lack self-assurance. By employing these measures, schools can have a pivotal impact on nurturing emotional well-being and improving academic performance for learners who lack confidence. The strategies are classified into two discrete categories: psychological assistance and social assistance. First and foremost, schools should prioritize the development of positive interpersonal relationships through training in the field of positive psychology (Schiavon, et al., 2020). This is thought to encourage the development of positive and trustworthy relationships between teachers and learners, and can generate mentorship programs that help learners participate with the school community.

A study conducted in a large southern school district in New Jersey examined 357 learners from two middle schools in the southwest region. The study concluded that schools should prioritize creating a safe and welcoming environment that promotes diversity and inclusivity. This would ensure that every learner feels accepted and recognized. Furthermore, schools have the opportunity to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs into their curriculum. These programs aim to educate learners about emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and interpersonal skills, as well as provide practical exercises and real-life situations for learners to apply and develop these abilities (Green, et al., 2021). The participants in the study were exclusively learners enrolled in secondary academic institutions, without any additional sources of data triangulation. Thus, the present study addressed research gaps in the existing literature by focusing specifically on teachers and principals in secondary schools.

According to Duong et al., (2021), schools have the ability to provide consistent counselling services and ensure the availability of school counsellors to support children dealing with emotional and social challenges. Offer group therapy sessions or support gatherings for learners who have had similar experiences. This will guarantee that learners are responsive. In addition, schools can provide consistent and organized timetables, together with clear instructions, to create a sense of expectation for kids who lack confidence. It is also important to communicate

any changes or disruptions in advance to boost learners' sense of security. According to several researchers (Oxley and Holden, 2021; Schieltz, et al., 2020), schools can promote positive discipline and encourage good behaviour by using positive reinforcement techniques. This involves focusing on teaching appropriate behaviour rather than relying on punishment. Schools can provide extra academic support and tailor education by offering supplementary assistance to learners facing academic challenges and collaborating with learning support services to effectively address the specific learning needs of individuals. Concurrently, engage parents and caregivers in their child's education and emotional well-being.

Lang, Jeon, Schoppe-Sullivan, and Wells (2020) conducted a study in the United States involving 90 families and children aged 12-36 months. The study found that regular communication within the family helps to create a strong support structure for the children's learning. Finally, schools can promote programs aimed at addressing poverty and creating a peaceful atmosphere conducive to nurturing social and personal development. These activities should prioritize social and life skills development (Ferreira, Martinsone & Talić, 2020). Provide a calm and safe space for learners to rest and relieve stress, and provide this room with sensory devices or activities that encourage relaxation.

In order to address the lack of research in this area, the prior study specifically examined families and infants, rather than focusing on learners and other participants. The present study, however, examined middle school learners, middle school teachers, and school principals, resulting in triangulation of findings, thereby filling up any gaps. Furthermore, the central point of local discussions in South African schools centres on the matter of safety and security, which is a substantial concern within the education system. Xaba (2014) study in South Africa proposed that guaranteeing school safety and security requires a comprehensive strategy that encompasses a thorough comprehension of the school setting and the essential tenets of school safety. The author highlighted the significance of maintaining and monitoring school infrastructure to guarantee the overall safety and security of a school (Xaba, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative for school administrators to give utmost importance to creating a safe learning environment by aggressively opposing all forms of violence and bullying, and implementing strict disciplinary measures against any negative behaviour, with the goal of enhancing the overall welfare of all learners.

Themane and Osher (2014) argue that learners need stable and supportive educational settings to attain academic success, develop positively, and thrive. These needs are particularly crucial

for children who are susceptible, primarily those who experience trauma, the challenges of poverty, and the complexities of racism, ethnocentrism, religious prejudice, and insecure attachment. While certain learners may perceive disruptive experiences that induce feelings of unsafety as valuable, others are adversely impacted by such encounters due to either their inherent sensitivity or a lack of social support. According to Themane and Osher (2014), South African schools can promote the safety of kids by establishing a supportive and all-encompassing atmosphere. This encompasses offering assistance, consideration, and nurturing, which safeguard learners against bodily injury and psychological anguish such as harassment and discrimination. In addition, cultivating robust relationships between learners and compassionate educators and peers enhances the overall welfare of pupils.

In addition, Van Jaarsveld and Minnaar (2012) argue that the introduction of security measures in schools requires the creation of detailed security and safety plans, as well as the completion of extensive risk assessment and threat analysis exercises. This encompasses the utilization of effective managerial techniques, the establishment of unambiguous safety protocols, the implementation of tangible security measures, the initiation of anti-bullying initiatives, and the cultivation of collaborative relationships with the community. The study highlighted the importance of utilizing a variety of approaches that involve school administration, teachers, learners, parents, and the broader community (Van Jaarsveld & Minnaar, 2012). Despite utilizing case studies, the study mentioned above was not classified as empirical research. Consequently, the present study employed an empirical methodology for data collecting.

An independent inquiry conducted in the Gauteng and North West areas of South Africa, including four schools, found that incidents of violence reported by pupils are often ignored by both their teachers and the school principal (Joyce, 2013). The study proposed strategies to enhance safety in educational institutions, hence promoting more effective instruction and academic progress. In essence, a study conducted in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mboyo (2019) found specific strategies that schools might use to provide a secure and nurturing environment for all pupils. The study emphasized the significance of understanding the needs of others, participating in discussions, and prioritizing those needs, assessing the available resources, and offering support to all learners in order to fit with organizational goals. The above reviewed study exclusively focused on primary school learners, and it did not focus on learners in secondary schools. Consequently, the present study filled this research gap by involving teachers, secondary school learners, and principals.

2.17 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provides a thorough analysis of the latest research on secure and insecure attachment, social competence, the effectiveness of teacher training programs in promoting secure attachment, and recommendations for schools to create a strong foundation of security for all learners. The chapter offered significant insights into the research gaps and contributions identified in the literature under examination, as well as the ongoing local and worldwide discussions concerning attachment and social competence. The subsequent chapter introduces the theoretical foundation that underpins the investigation.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF THE STUDY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The study was informed by two theories: the Attachment Theory by John Bowlby (1969), and Ecological Systems Theory by Bronfenbrenner Uri (1986). These theories are discussed in the following sections.

3.2 ATTACHMENT THEORY

Higgenbotham (2016) suggests that attachment theory serves as a unifying framework for integrating many psychological theories that contribute to study and practice in the field of psychology. The theory provides a complete explanation for cognitive processes, relationship dynamics, and systemic circumstances that influence human behaviour. It aids in comprehending many phenomena such as behaviour, dealing with interpersonal stressors, resolving conflicts, and overall psychological adaptation. Attachment theory was primarily formulated by John Bowlby (1969), who provided the framework for the theory, and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, 1978), who offered the initial empirical evidence. The theory of attachment provides a conceptual framework for comprehending how children see their own identity in relation to the social environment. This framework comprises various attachment styles that illustrate the development of attachment over time and the impact of positive and negative experiences on children's psychological well-being.

i. Secure attachment style

Secure attachment refers to a child's reliance on their caretakers to express sorrow when they are separated and joy when they are reunited. Although the youngster may experience distress, they possess the understanding that the provider will return. Children that have a strong attachment to their caregivers are not hesitant to seek support and confirmation from them. These children would develop resilience and self-reliance as they grow into adulthood. Secure attachment provides a child with a secure and stable environment, which promotes their inclination to explore, engage in play, and exhibit appropriate social behaviours (Sterkenburg, van Rensburg & van Deventer, 2011). An attentive caregiver demonstrates sensitivity by accurately interpreting the child's cues, empathizing with the child's perspective, and promptly and appropriately meeting the child's needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

ii. Fearful attachment style

Children with anxious attachment show a lot of different behaviours that make them look like they are lost, having trouble, or not sure what to do. Caregivers likely act in different ways at different times because there isn't a clear pattern of connections. Parents may be both a source of comfort and fear for this child, which can make them act crazily. People worry a lot that an attachment figure won't be there for them or help them when they need it (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

iii. Disorganized attachment style

Within this category, youngsters exhibit chaos, resulting in heightened distress when a parent departs. The disordered attachment style, although not widely favoured, is frequently associated with parents or guardians who are inaccessible. Due to the inconsistent availability of their parents, these children cannot rely on their primary caregiver to be present when they require assistance.

iv. Avoidant attachment style

Lastly, the avoidant attachment hypothesis posits that children with this form of attachment actively evade or steer clear of their parents or caregivers, and do not display any discernible preference between a caregiver and an unfamiliar individual. According to Brenan, Clark and Shaver (1998), this attachment pattern may arise from guardians who were abusive or neglectful towards the child. The component of avoidance demonstrates the child's lack of confidence in the caregiver and desire to maintain independence and emotional distance from them.

3.2.1 RELEVANCE OF THE ATTACHMENT THEORY TO THE STUDY

This theory is pertinent to the study because it posits how the initial engagement of learners with parents and caregivers augments emotional and social growth. Research indicates that attachment theory can be used to accurately forecast an individual's level of social competence and independence. Moreover, it represents a collection of work that aims to elucidate social connections and responses to their disturbances. This framework was employed to facilitate the investigation of interpersonal relationships and parent-child relationships, specifically examining the dynamics between children, parents, or teachers, and how these dynamics contribute to the development of close relationships among learners. Furthermore, this

framework also explores the impact of these relationships on children's psychological well-being and the potential reduction of anti-social behaviour. The framework is associated with various outcomes that are important for achieving success in school and developing social competence. These outcomes are directly related to the two objectives of this study: firstly, to determine the level of support for secure attachment provided by current teacher training programs in schools, and secondly, to create a framework for teachers in township schools to foster secure attachment among learners who come from backgrounds with insecure attachment. Applying this approach can help identify strategies for how township schools might support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The next theory discussed is Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

3.3 BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory perceives development as an intricate system of interconnections influenced by various levels of the immediate surroundings, encompassing family, school, church, society, as well as values, norms, and customs. The framework examines the child and their daily surroundings, as well as the interplay with the broader environment. Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposed a framework that acknowledges the presence of several factors in a child's life that interact with and impact the child's development. Psychologist Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979) sought to disrupt the existing state of affairs and advocate for societal backing of marginalized individuals by advocating for a complete overhaul of their surroundings, as outlined in the theory. The theory is categorized into five distinct systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The five systems are interconnected and exert an impact on the child's development based on their interactions with one another (Evans, 2020). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory states that children are affected by five ecological elements, microsystem mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem, which are discussed below.

Microsystem

The microsystem is the initial tier of Bronfenbrenner's theory, encompassing the entities that directly interact with the kid in their immediate surroundings, including parents, siblings, teachers, and school peers. According to Evans (2020), the microsystem is the most impactful

level within the ecological systems theory. Relationships within a microsystem are characterized by reciprocity, indicating that the child can be both influenced by individuals in their environment and could impact the beliefs and behaviours of others as well. The interactions within microsystems are frequently intimate and play a vital role in nurturing and facilitating the child's growth. A child's positive development is influenced by a strong nurturing relationship with their parents. Child development might be adversely impacted by parents who are emotionally aloof and lacking in affection (Evans, 2020). Children are born inside a microsystem that immediately influences and moulds their experiences. Regrettably, youngsters hailing from underprivileged households are more susceptible to experiencing challenging family dynamics. This is partially attributed to the fact that parenting becomes more arduous when one is experiencing economic disadvantage. Moreover, these youngsters are more prone to encountering adverse circumstances at school and being impacted by unfavourable peer connections. Consequently, a youngster that is brought up in an unfavourable microsystem would face challenges in attaining success.

Mesosystem

The second system, referred to as the mesosystem, examines the interactions among the child's microsystems, such as the relationships between the child's parents and teachers, or between school peers and siblings. The mesosystem refers to the interconnection and interdependence of an individual's several microsystems. A mesosystem can be defined as a network of interconnected microsystems (Evans, 2020). According to the ecological systems theory, the child's growth is positively influenced when there is a harmonious relationship between their parents and friends. Conversely, if there is conflict between the child's friends and parents, it can have negative consequences on their development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Exosystem

The exosystem encompasses other social institutions, both formal and informal, that do not directly involve the child but exert an indirect influence on them by impacting one of the microsystems, such as the neighbourhood, parents' workplaces, parents' acquaintances, and the mass media. These are extrinsic surroundings that do not engage the child directly, yet nonetheless have an impact on them. The exosystem of a child can be broadened to encompass

social media, video games, and other contemporary interactions inside the ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Macrosystem

The fourth system, known as the macrosystem, examines the impact of cultural factors on a child's development, including socioeconomic level, wealth, poverty, geographical location, and ethnicity. For instance, a child residing in a developing nation might undergo distinct developmental patterns compared to a youngster residing in a more affluent one (Evans, 2020). This played a crucial role in this research as it served as the lenses used to scrutinize findings. The culture in which individuals are deeply involved has the capacity to shape their views and the occurrences that unfold in their lives. The macrosystem encompasses the pre-existing societal and cultural context in which a kid is undergoing development.

Chronosystem

The ultimate stage of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is referred to as the chronosystem. This system encompasses all environmental modifications that transpire throughout an individual's lifespan, exerting an influence on their development. It encompasses significant life transitions as well as historical occurrences (Evans, 2020). These transitions can encompass typical life events like beginning school, as well as atypical life events like divorce, the loss of a parent or friend, grade repetition, or relocation.

3.2.1 RELEVANCE OF BRONFENBRENNER'S ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY TO THE STUDY

Connecting the theory to the current study, it can be affirmed that the theory is pertinent to this research as it has consequences for educational practice. Children raised in socioeconomically challenged settings necessitate comprehensive assistance that addresses their particular needs as well as the broader community they belong to. Bronfenbrenner's notable contribution is in elucidating the fact that parent-child relationships are not self-contained, but rather subject to the impact of wider social frameworks, such as the community, society, and culture. In order to achieve optimal development, it is crucial that every child has at least one adult who demonstrates a deep level of care for their overall welfare. This model includes the personality

of both parents and children, their developmental background, and contextual factors such as social support, the job environment of the parents, and the quality of their marital relationship. A more comprehensive understanding of human development can be achieved by examining the key determinants that influence attachment in a particular study (Casandy et al., 2001).

The study focused on three specific systems: macrosystems, chronosystem, and microsystems. The macrosystem and chronosystem are interconnected and are relevant to the study's second and third objectives, which are to investigate the factors that contribute to insecure attachment styles among learners in township schools and to examine the social competences of learners with insecure parent-child attachments. The study aims to examine the aspects that arise from life transitions, whether they are natural or unnatural events, and their impact on a child's social development and self-perception. The initial aim of the study, which is to determine the types of parent-child bonds exhibited by learners in township schools, can be accomplished through the utilization of the microsystem. This strategy focuses on the bond and relationships that occur inside a child's local environment.

3.4: SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter introduced the two essential theoretical frameworks that form the basis of the study. The study primarily relied on attachment theory as its core framework, with ecological systems theory being used to support and build upon attachment theory. Furthermore, the rationale for the two theoretical frameworks has been examined. The subsequent chapter outlines the research design and technique employed in the study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research design and methodology employed in the study. This includes, the research paradigm, the design, sample, data gathering methods, and data analysis. Furthermore, the reliability of qualitative data and ethical concerns are discussed.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm is a set of beliefs that is shared by a group of scholars or a specific school of thinking. A worldview is a cognitive framework through which the world is perceived and a commonly accepted perspective that is regarded as established fact (McMillan, 2014). This study employed the interpretivism research paradigm. Interpretivism, in essence, is providing a specific and localized understanding of a single event, rather than a broad and universal understanding. The interpretivism paradigm prioritizes culture-bound frameworks and the individual's comprehension and behavior within specific social contexts, rather than seeking universal principles or comprehensive explanations (Feinberg & Soltis, 2009). Within the interpretivism paradigm, actions and meaning can be comprehended through the application of empathic interpretive strategies, which involve a series of hermeneutic acts and the establishment of an empathetic environment (Scott, 2013). An advantage of interpretivism is its subjective nature, which avoids assuming that any understanding is universally relevant to every setting. This study is reliable and advantageous as it enables participants to express their genuine experiences, daily occurrences, and identify the most effective strategies for their specific circumstances. For this study, it would involve conducting one-on-one interviews with participants to gain insights into their experiences and perspectives regarding aspects of attachment and social competence among learners.

A research paradigm comprises four essential components: axiology, ontology, technique, and epistemology. Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that the core principles that characterize a specific research paradigm can be encapsulated by the answers provided to fundamental inquiries:

4.2.1 Axiology

Axiology is largely concerned with defining the objectives or goals of the investigation. This branch of research philosophy aims to elucidate the subject matter or phenomena being described or predicted in the research. The objective is to comprehend the significance of the research (Cresswell, 1994). In this study, the concepts of attachment and social competence may vary significantly among learners in various life settings. The concepts possess objectivity in their inherent nature; yet, it is crucial to acknowledge that they exhibit subjectivity in the way they are perceived by diverse learners. According to interpretivism, the universe is formed by the interactions of individuals, each of whom has their own subjective experiences and perceptions (Scott, 2013). The paradigmatic approach seeks to interact with participants through individual interviews in order to comprehend their experiences regarding attachment styles and social skills for the purpose of conducting the study.

4.2.2 Ontology

Cresswell (1994) argues that ontology enables us to comprehend the structure and essence of reality within a particular paradigm. Interpretivism posits that reality is intricate and ever-changing, and it is shaped, comprehended, and lived by individuals through their interactions with one another and with broader social structures, such as the flexible definitions of a situation that are formed through human interaction and the social construction of reality. Perception of reality varies from person to person. Individuals perceive and interpret reality through various subjective experiences. Subjective reality, as exemplified by individuals' thoughts, emotions, and perceptions, holds significant importance (Neuman, 2000). The current research is subjective and does not make any assumptions about its applicability to every circumstance. The study's subjective nature allowed participants to answer the research questions within their own specific settings, which is important for achieving the study's aims. Hence, several education stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, and learners, were included in this research by means of interviews to exchange their experiences.

4.2.3 Epistemology

The epistemological question pertains to the fundamental belief regarding knowledge and the factors that contribute to it, such as what can be known and the values that influence knowledge (Cresswell, 1994). Knowledge is derived from a combination of observable phenomena and subjective factors such as views, values, reasons, and understandings. Knowledge is the understanding of how individuals get meaning in their lives. It is influenced by the social and cultural environment, allowing us to comprehend the reasons behind people's behavior

(Neuman, 2000). The interpretivism paradigm was applicable and pertinent to the objective of this research study, which is to explore methods by which schools might strive to create an atmosphere that fosters secure attachment and social competence for learners with a past or current experience of insecure attachment.

4.3 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research methodology that is closely associated with the interpretivism paradigm, which is inherently subjective. A qualitative research methodology involves systematically understanding an issue and then constructing a narrative case to address it (Creswell, 1998, as referenced in Fouche 2005). A qualitative methodology aims to comprehensively grasp the fundamental nature of a phenomenon or issue. This is accomplished by conducting in-depth individual interviews and actively engaging people in a more direct manner (McMillan, 2014). Thus, qualitative research places importance on authentic environments, comprehension, and spoken accounts. The qualitative research methodology proved valuable for this study because to its emphasis on comprehending the participants' experiences inside their authentic and routine environments. The study sought to enhance knowledge and comprehension of attachment and social competence, as well as explore how schools may support learners with insecure attachment and social incompetence. In order to present a compelling case, it is crucial for the school under study to thoroughly comprehend the context of the problem and assess the most appropriate remedy for the specific group involved.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a multiple case-study research design. Creswell (1998), as referenced by Fouche (2005), proposed the concept of qualitative research as a study conducted inside a single environment or with a limited number of participants. This study consisted of a multiple case study with a limited and appropriate sample size of participants. McMillan (2014) defines a case study as a comprehensive examination of a singular occurrence, non-experimental event, or object, which is characterized by its specific context and duration. According to Yin (2009), a multi-case study is a more effective approach for investigating a subject that involves multiple cases, components, or members. Stewart (2012) differentiates between single-case studies with multiple components (referred to as embedded cases) and true multi-case studies, which he considers as distinct 'experiments'. True multi-case studies involve replication across multiple

instances and are determined by the study's objectives. A multiple-case study involves the investigation of a specific occurrence or group of phenomena at numerous places or locations (Stewart, 2012).

The utilization of a multiple case-study research design was pertinent to this investigation due to its capacity to enable the researcher to gather a greater amount of data that would be challenging to get through other designs. Utilizing multiple case studies enables the researcher to comprehensively understand concepts and generate information that may be utilized for future hypothesis development. This study employed a multiple case-study design, focusing on three township schools in Gauteng province, South Africa, which were classified as quintile 1 to 3. The research exposed different quintiles to varying experiences of learner attachment and social competence. Based on the findings, inferences were developed regarding how township schools might attain secure attachment and social competence.

Schools are categorized using a quintile approach. Public schools are classified into five distinct quintiles based on contextual and geographical factors. A quintile system is a classification technique utilized to categorize schools for the purpose of allocating government funds (Corruption Watch, 2013). The rates indicate the quintile in which the school is classified based on the levels of unemployment, income, and illiteracy in the surrounding area of the school. The quintile system was a component of the National Norms and Standards (1998). The introduction of this measure aimed to enhance educational equity, as insufficient funding might impede the quality of education in South Africa. This is particularly relevant for the majority of learners who confront the challenges of poverty and unemployment within their households (National Norms and Standards, 1998).

Quintiles 1 to 3 encompass 60% of the country's schools, predominantly located in rural areas and townships. Quintile one public schools are typically tuition-free institutions that get an annual allocation of around R1316 per learner from the government. This funding is intended to cover the costs of learning materials and other operational expenditures of the school. The school's running costs encompass expenses related to water and energy, which are insufficient when considering the duration of the year, inflation, and the day-to-day upkeep of the school (Nkosi, 2018). Quintiles 4 and 5, which make up only 40% of the country's schools, are primarily situated in advanced communities like urban areas. These are prestigious and well-funded public schools that require payment of tuition. The organization obtains revenue from parental fees and donations, as well as a limited amount of financial support from the state (Nkosi, 2018). Quintile 4 schools receive an annual funding of R660 per learner, whilst quintile

five schools only receive R228 in public finance. This financing is utilized in conjunction with tuition fees and additional contributions from parents and sponsors. Quintile four and five schools are expected to augment their state funding by implementing school fees and engaging in fundraising activities (Corruption Watch, 2013).

4.5 RESEARCH SITE

There were three schools available for selection in the Sedibeng West region of Gauteng province, South Africa, all of which fell within the range of public schools ranked in quintiles 1 to 2. The schools in these quintiles enrol learners from diverse backgrounds, including variations in family structures, social environments, household incomes, and demographic characteristics. This encompassed all facets, phases of attachment, and levels of social proficiency, while also exposing the research to diverse reactions. School profiles were gathered from principals or deputy principals, who possess a comprehensive understanding of the learners enrolled in their schools. Three township schools in the Sedibeng West area were chosen due to the scarcity of study on schools in the Vaal triangle, in contrast to schools in Johannesburg or larger townships like Soweto, Tembisa, and Katlehong.

The township schools that were researched are located in the Sedibeng region of Gauteng, South Africa. The Sedibeng area is characterized by significant socio-economic issues, mostly driven by rampant unemployment, pervasive inequality, and persistent poverty. Moreover, there has been a continuous rise in the proportion of those living in poverty. The persistent issue of environmental quality mostly revolves around water pollution caused by the failure of the sewer network. This has had various repercussions on the socio-economic conditions of the entire area. As of 2018, there were more than one thousand homes led by individuals under the age of 18. Among these houses, 20.5% were informal dwellings, and the average yearly income was R2400 (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020).

The majority of households lack sufficient cash to afford basic necessities or provide their children with access to higher-quality education. Based on the findings of the Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2020), the district and its regions demonstrate comparatively lower levels of poverty among people when applying the food poverty line of R561 per person per month. Nevertheless, the poverty rate of 48.5% is shown by the upper poverty level of R1,227 per person per month. The Sedibeng District has undergone substantial deindustrialization due to the downturn in the steel industry, which serves as a major source of

employment in the district. The region's economic growth rate has been significantly impacted by several economic issues, leading to a high unemployment rate of 50.7% and a backlog of job prospects (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020).

Sekhampu and Niyimbanira (2013) found that the state's old-age pension award accounts for 19.2% of household income, making it the second largest contributor. The state's old age grant is allocated based on means testing and is provided to South African residents who are aged 60 or over and demonstrate financial need. Additional contributors include the child support grant (CSG), which is provided to parents of children under the age of 18 who are in need. The incidence of teenage pregnancy was increasing. There was a favourable correlation between the number of employed individuals and the educational level of the household head, and their impact on household expenditure. According to Sekhampu and Niyimbanira (2013), households with more educated heads tend to have higher household expenditure compared to households with less educated heads. The socio-economic difficulties and factors observed in Sedibeng West include limited household spending, inadequate education levels, poor family income, high unemployment rate, poverty, child-headed families, teenage pregnancy, single parenthood, and maternal education.

4.6 RESEARCH SAMPLING

Sampling is a method used to choose a subset of the population for a study (Maree, 2011). Sampling in qualitative studies serves the objective of selecting a subset of individuals who can effectively represent a larger population and provide focused replies, as stated by McMillan (2014). The participants in this study were selected using the purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling refers to the deliberate selection of individuals who possess relevant knowledge and a deeper comprehension of the research issue. The researcher exercises judgment to include these participants in the study (McMillan, 2014).

The sampling frame comprised 27 participants, including 6 life orientation teachers, 18 grade 10 learners, and 3 deputy principals from 3 specifically chosen secondary schools in the Sedibeng West district. Six Life-Orientation teachers, two from each school, were chosen using purposive sampling technique. The criteria for selecting teachers required a minimum of 3 years of teaching experience, preferably within the same school or in general. The choice of the 6 teachers was made using purposive sampling technique, based on the belief that Life-Orientation teachers have a significant impact on the overall development of learners.

A purposive sample strategy was used to select grade 10 learners, with 6 learners selected from each school. The participants were chosen based on their attachment histories in their homes and their display of antisocial behavior in schools. This selection was marked by learners who exhibited explicit hostility, deliberate aggressiveness towards others, and learners with a family history of social and antisocial behaviors as well as parental alcohol and drug misuse. The deputy principals were asked to provide the profile of learners. The selection of the 6 learners took into account the gender aspect. A total of six participants, consisting of three males and three females, were chosen for the research investigation. Gender consideration is crucial in learner selection due to the differential rates and patterns of emotional and social development experienced by boys and girls, which have been substantiated by research. In addition, deputy principals were chosen using purposive sample technique to gather information on how schools provide assistance to learners with insecure attachment. The amalgamation of these participants, possessing extensive information, experiences, and expertise, made a valuable contribution to the research. The selection process prioritized learners who exhibit passive and withdrawn behavior, as well as demonstrate indications of attachment difficulties in the classroom, as judged by their instructor (Ubha & Cahill, 2014). The aforementioned volunteers made positive contributions to the study and helped achieve the targeted objectives of the investigation.

4.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data gathering procedures for a qualitative study encompass more than just surveys, interviews, observations, and open-ended questionnaires (McMillan, 2014). Data collection for this study involved the utilization of open semi-structured interviews.

4.7.1 Semi-structured interviews for learners, teachers and deputy principals

Data from learners, deputy principals and teachers were collected using semi-structured interviews. Walliman (2009) asserts that semi-structured interviews are a versatile instrument that can provide a more comprehensive and abundant dataset compared to other methods of data collection. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to gain a perspective on the world through the participants' eyes and provide interviewers with an opportunity to express their perspectives (Cohen et al., 2011). According to McMillan (2014), semi-structured

interviews are characterized by their flexibility and the use of clear questions to get insight into participants' perceptions and to examine themes in a thorough and detailed manner.

The duration of the interview sessions for each research participant ranged from 35 to 45 minutes. This allowed for thorough questioning and provided participants with the chance to ask clarifying questions when needed. Wholey, Hatry, and Kathryn (2010) suggest that in order to reduce respondent fatigue, a semi-structured interview should not exceed one hour in duration. The interview data were recorded on tape in order to be transcribed and analyzed later. The study utilized semi-structured interviews, which involved a combination of open-ended questions and follow-up questions. These interviews were effective in gathering detailed information from the participants. Thus, employing semi-structured interviews can facilitate a casual and interactive face-to-face dialogue, as the study aimed to understand the perspectives of each participant (Wholey, Hatry & Kathryn, 2010).

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves the systematic arrangement of gathered data from participants, dividing it into manageable sections (McMillan, 2014). Furthermore, data analysis is regarded as a rigorous process that entails the extensive advancement of research. In addition, McMillan (2014) suggests that data analysis occurs both throughout the data gathering process and after all data has been gathered.

The data obtained from semi-structured interviews was evaluated thematically, using research questions as a framework (Cohen et al., 2011). Thematic analysis involves the process of recognizing and evaluating patterns of significance derived from collected data. The process of thematic analysis consists of several stages, including becoming acquainted with the data, coding, generating and searching for themes, reviewing the themes, defining the themes, and producing the final report. Themes were derived from both emic and etic data, wherein phrases, comparable reactions, and noteworthy events were recognized and categorized into specific categories. Emic data analysis involves the examination and interpretation of information provided by individuals in their own language, actions, and explanations. Etic data, as defined by McMillan (2014), pertains to the researcher's interpretation of patterns and conclusions.

4.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

Strydom (2005) emphasizes the importance of addressing ethical concerns when conducting research to prevent any potential physical or psychological harm to the participants. Strydom (2005) emphasizes that it is the researcher's duty to safeguard participants and minimize the potential for any adverse effects or pain. In order to enhance comfort, the research aims to reduce the duration of each interview session to a minimum of 30 minutes, with a maximum limit of 50 minutes in case of any overlap. In order to avoid causing discomfort, personal questions that could potentially make participants uneasy were excluded. In addition, concise and succinct interview questions were designed to respect the time of the participants. Interviewing children raises ethical considerations, particularly when children with emotional and behavioral difficulties are engaged, as they are seen as more vulnerable (Cooper, 2006). These concerns have been highlighted by Brownlow and O'Dell (2002). Taking into consideration the child-centered approach, which aims to facilitate children in providing sincere feedback about themselves, their thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, will be implemented (Ubha & Cahill, 2014).

Strict adherence to ethical protocols was maintained. The research commenced with receiving ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee, followed by obtaining authorization from the Gauteng Department of Education and the school principals. Participation in this study was optional. Participants possessed the prerogative to discontinue their involvement in the research at any point of the research procedure. Participants had the option to refrain from answering any questions if they so choose. Participants did not get any immediate advantages by opting to participate in the research study, nor did they forfeit any services, benefits, or rights that they would typically have if they chose not to participate. Participating in the research study was free of charge for all participants.

The ethical considerations in the present investigation are presented in terms of three key aspects:

Informed consent: A consent letter, based on the concepts of autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence, was provided to all participants (Cohen et al., 2011). Strydom (2005) states that participants must be informed that their involvement is voluntary and that they have the right to resign from the research at any moment without facing any consequences. Participants were provided with a permission form that clearly outlined the goal of the study and requested their voluntary involvement in the research. The researchers sought the approval of the participants,

who willingly agreed to take part in the study by signing the consent forms, thus ensuring their voluntary involvement.

Anonymity: This refers to the process of collecting data from participants without obtaining any personally identifiable information (Wiles, Crow, Heath & Charlse, 2008). In this study, anonymity was maintained by using pseudonyms to ensure the participants' identities remained confidential. The research findings were solely utilized for academic purposes and would be discarded after the study is finished.

Confidentiality: This pertains to the moral obligation of the researcher to refrain from revealing any patient information without proper authorization (Merideth, 2007). In order to maintain anonymity, interviews were performed in separate rooms for teachers, deputy principals, and learners, ensuring that the information and responses of participants were not exposed to others. Furthermore, the electronic transcribed data was securely saved in a computer, with its password known only to the researcher. Access to the data was granted to the supervisor upon request. The stored data would be deleted after a 5-year period following the conclusion of the research study.

4.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA

Trustworthiness is the quality of being reliable and dependable, demonstrated by providing correct evidence and valid interpretations of the stated outcomes. The research attempted to establish the credibility of its conclusions, allowing for the verification of the data (Maree, 2011). Guba (as mentioned in Shanton, 2004) introduced four factors that must be taken into account to enhance the reliability of qualitative research. The requirements encompass credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4.10.1 Credibility

Credibility encompasses the utilization of suitable research methodologies and acquiring a deep understanding of the participants' culture, as well as the various types of participants and sites involved. It involves asking repetitive questions during interviews, providing a comprehensive background description, conducting member checks on data transcriptions, and offering a detailed account of the case study (Shanton, 2004). In this study, credibility was ensured since triangulation method was employed to utilize interview transcripts in order to accurately depict

all cases and provide a comprehensive account of the setting and backdrop of schools. Furthermore, the participants reviewed their interview transcripts and provided their signature as confirmation of the data.

4.10.2 Transferability

According to Shanton (2004), the findings of a qualitative study should be interpreted in light of the specific attributes of the organization, such as the geographical location where the research was conducted. This concept is referred to as transferability. In order to ensure the transferability of this research, the study provided information regarding the number and location of the schools involved, any restrictions on the individuals who contributed data, the number of participants, the methods used for data collection, and the number and duration of the interview sessions, as well as the time period during which the data was collected.

4.10.3 Dependability

Shanton (2004) suggests that in order to ensure dependability, it is important to provide a thorough and detailed account of the techniques used in the study. This level of coverage allows the reader to evaluate the amount to which correct research methods were followed. Dependability pertains to the trustworthiness and uniformity of the study outcomes, enabling external individuals to scrutinize, evaluate, and establish connections about the research procedures. Dependability in this study was guaranteed by incorporating the research report, the research design and its execution, detailing the planned and executed activities on site, the operational specifics of data collecting, and a description of the research procedures conducted in schools.

4.10.4 Confirmability

An important factor in determining confirmability is the degree to which the researcher acknowledges their own biases. A thorough and specific explanation of the methodology allows the reader to assess the credibility of the data and the concepts derived from it (Shanton, 2004). In this study, the confirmability of qualitative data was ensured by providing a full account of the audit trail, which documented the source of evidence for the interview results. In addition, the study employed various methodologies to gather data, allowing for the cross-validation of interview data from different viewpoints. In addition, this thesis has also provided a detailed account of the methodological techniques utilized to ensure confirmability of the interview data.

4.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study was restricted to instructors, deputy principals, and learners. The emphasis was placed on three public schools located in the Sedibeng West region of the Gauteng province. The study specifically excluded individuals in education who were not within the scope of Life-Orientation and did not possess the necessary teaching expertise, including parents, community members, government officials, and other teachers. The study was exclusively done from September to October 2022. To safeguard the participants' protection, the Wits ethical clearance committee authorized all interview questions and excluded any personal inquiries that could potentially make the participants uncomfortable or uninterested in participating in the conversation. It is crucial to highlight that we made sure to prioritize safety, secrecy, and anonymity in order to promote participation. The analysis only investigated schools in close proximity for the sake of convenience and to save excessive travel expenses.

4.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter provided an explanation of the research design and technique used in the study. This chapter examined the research paradigm, study design, research sample, data gathering methods, data analysis, and trustworthiness of data. In the following chapter, the study's findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings and interpretation derived from research interviews performed with learners, teachers, and assistant principals from three secondary schools in the Sedibeng West township. The chapter delved into the findings regarding the types of parent-child attachments exhibited by grade 10 learners, the factors that influence these attachment patterns, the outcomes related to social competence and incompetence, and lastly, how schools can serve as a stable and supportive environment for learners coming from unstable family backgrounds. The findings are presented as follows:

5.2: FINDINGS ON FORMS OF PARENT-CHILD ATTACHMENTS POSSESSED BY GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN SEDIBENG WEST TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

The study explored the forms of parent-child attachments possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools. The data from learners, teachers, and deputy principals was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings derived from the themes revealed that the types of parent-child attachments commonly observed among learners encompass secure, avoidant-dismissive, anxious, and disorganized/fearful attachment patterns. The themes are presented and addressed in the following manner:

Themes	Number of Learners	Number of Teachers	Number of Deputy Principals
1. Secure	11	04	02
2. Avoidant-Dismissive	04	02	01
3. Anxious	02	02	Nil
4. Disorganized/ fearful	01	01	03

Table 1: Summary of themes on parent-child attachment patterns

5.2.1 Theme 1: *Secure attachment style*

Secure attachment pertains to children who depend on their caregivers to exhibit anguish upon separation and happiness upon reunion. Despite the child's distress, they have confidence that the caregiver will come back. Securely linked children, when experiencing fear, feel at ease in

seeking reassurance from their caregivers. A caregiver who is sensitive demonstrates the ability to see and understand the signals given by the kid, empathizes with the child's point of view, and promptly and correctly meets the child's needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). The secure connection provides a stable foundation for the child, enabling them to engage in exploration, play, and other social activities (Sterkenburg, van Rensburg & van Deventer, 2011). Research consistently shows that children who have a secure attachment to their parents exhibit positive communication patterns, experience lower levels of anxiety and frustration, employ effective strategies to manage distress, and demonstrate higher levels of academic and social skills (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020). Secure attachment is the outcome of a past where an individual has effectively sought and obtained assistance from one or more attachment figures (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1973).

Out of the eighteen learner participants, eleven of them hailed from homes with secure attachments. The interview findings indicated affection and a sense of safety. The following interview excerpts from participants who discussed secure attachments are provided below: *"The relationship that I share with my mother is very strong. I am never bored when I am with her. I share my personal experiences with her and even socialize with her."* (Learner participant 1). Similarly, another learner reported on secure attachment as follows: *"My family is caring and loving but at the same time they're strict and protective"* (Learner participant 2). Another learner reported on secure families as cohesive as follows: *"I can say my family relationship is cohesive. Which we stick together. This is something good for me as I am able to speak to my family about anything. We spend more time together and go to church together"* (Learner participant, 3). In addition, a learner from secure home reported on good communication and respect as follows: *"My family relationship is good, well we all have good communication and respect for each other."* (Learner participant, 4). In another aspect, a learner reported on supportive family as follows: *"My family relationship would be described as a happy family, a family with no secrets and a supportive family."* (Learner participant, 6). On the same vein, another learner reported on secure homes as that with strong love and bond with relatives as follows: *"My family relationship shows a strong love and bond we have built together over the years including our relatives. We come together as one family with an unbreakable bond with siblings, mother, sister's uncles and aunties."* (Learner participant, 12). Similarly, another learner also reported on love among their family members as follows: *"My family takes care of each other, they are loving people although we might squabble over small things at times at the end of the day we move and continue with our lives."* (Learner participant, 17). Moreover,

another reiterate that their family has unconditional love as follows: *"The family is there for each other in times of need also my family doesn't just share family history as a family we supply one another we have unconditional love."* (Learner participant, 18).

On the bases of the interview findings above, it is evident that learners from secure attachment homes experience love, string bond, good communication and support for all children in the family and this enhances positive development among them.

Three other learner participants 8, 14 and 16 also reported on secure attachment homes as those that have strong bonds, good conflict management mechanisms, open and supportive structures as follows:

> *"My relationship with my family is just fine, my family and I don't have a strong bond especially when it comes to my sister and I but I can say that my family is really supportive and loving. We do everything for one another. My family is the best and I thank God for them."* (Learner participant, 8)

> *"My family relationship is healthy, we advise each other on things about life and even though we have our ups and downs and sometimes we get in a conflict but after a few minutes we would be in a nice conversation."* (Learner participant, 14)

> *"We are a very close family we are open to each other and love one another my family is supportive and we have a very strong bond we share everything and we are always happy. We always wish each the best of life so I would say we have a very safe and healthy relationship."* (Learner participant, 16)

Based on the information provided, learners exhibited favourable emotions stemming from their familial connections, including trust, affection, and the ability to resolve conflicts. This refers to a secure attachment style. In agreement, Ainsworth et al., (1978) and Bowlby (1973) contend that secure attachment arises from a track record of effectively seeking and obtaining assistance from one or more attachment figures. The data collected from learners indicated the presence of robust, well-functioning households characterized by support, transparent communication, and nurturing. Furthermore, the results obtained from teachers and deputy principals about secure attachment styles indicated that all three schools under investigation

had learners with secure attachment styles. All six teachers identified learners with secure attachment styles, and two out of three deputy principals confirmed this. Below are extracts from interviews with teachers on secure attachment: *"At our school we deal with different personalities and our grade 10 learners possess different types of attachment and secure both negative and positive attachments such as dismissive attachments and secure attachments."* (Teacher participant, 2). Another teacher participant reported on secure learners that: *"We find secure learners, most learners possess high levels of confidence within the classroom in terms of participation, engagement with learning materials as well as assessments…"* (Teacher, participant, 5). Similarly, another teacher participant reported on dismissive attachment style as follows: *"From the top of my head, I can only think of dismissive and aggressive learners, insecure learners and confident learners…"* (Teacher participant, 6). In addition, two deputy principals participants also reported on various attachment styles as follows:

> *"Grade 10 learners tend to possess a number of the attachments ranging from disorganised, secure to avoidant. In spite of coming and growing up in the midst lack, most learners tend to be emotionally, mentally and physically fairly well balanced depending on the situations that might trigger a particular disposure in a learner."*
>
> (Deputy principal participant, 3)

> *"In my experience I can positively say that I have seen all kinds of children. I have taught for more that 30 years in this school and I think most of our learners here are from poor homes and most of them lack confidence. Funny enough, we have learners who are confident in negative behaviours and are notorious around the school. We have a few confident learners who are respectful, performing and goal driven."*
>
> (Deputy principal participant, 2)

Based on the interview excerpts provided above, it is evident that the information provided by learners aligns with the data provided by teachers and deputy managers. All research participants successfully recognized secure attachment behaviours exhibited by their learners. Based on the statistics, secure learners are characterized as self-assured and courteous individuals who demonstrate extensive engagement in the classroom and possess a strong comprehension of both formal and informal assessments. In agreement, Bowlby's (1973) argue that individuals who are securely attached demonstrate social competence, possess advanced

cognitive abilities, exhibit prolonged attention spans, have a strong sense of self-worth, and receive adequate support.

5.2.2 Theme 2: *Avoidant-Dismissive attachment style*

Children are inherently inclined to seek care and when their needs are unmet, they often exhibit behaviours that push away important caregivers due to their fear of rejection. Insecure avoidant behaviour serves as a defence strategy against unresponsiveness and rage, functioning as a means of self-protection. An avoidant attachment occurs when an infant develops the belief that their caregiver will not be responsive to their needs. This attachment type has been associated with caregivers who are insensitive, inconsistent, or rejecting (Balasingham, 2008). The children's avoidance behaviour is influenced by their caregiver's inclination to be insensitive, invasive, angry, and/or rejecting (Ainsworth 1979; Crittenden, 1992). In summary, the interview excerpts provided below demonstrate the conversations of individuals who were raised in households with avoidant attachment styles. Out of the eighteen participants, only four believed that their family dysfunction and irregularity stemmed from a lack of support, anger, and closed communication within their immediate families. The following statements were provided by learners. *"There is not much respect for each other, there are a lot of fights and arguments but end up forgiving each other after sometime lack of communication and support."* (Learner participant, 5). "We have a strong bond as a family but we don't communicate every time because each person does their own duty everyday so it is just hard to communicate with each other..." (Learner participant, 13).
Furthermore, two more learners spoke about their home relationships.

> *"My family relationship is not balanced when it comes to me. I can communicate with the adults really well but when it comes to my cousins I can't really talk to them that much. But the relationship I value the most is with my grandmother and aunt because they are always there for me."* (Learner participant, 7)

> *"... My father is the only person I would say I am not that close with compared to my mother and my sister and that is because of his swearing, it is constant and annoying but we are still very close, I want us to be close."* (Learner participant, 9)

In addition, a deputy principal classified pupils in grade 10 as having an avoidant-dismissive attachment style due to their inclination to seek care and dependence from their caregiver while simultaneously pushing them away. In addition, two teachers held the belief that dismissive learners experience a fear of rejection and have a strong want to be selected and liked.

> *"From my teaching experience, grade 10 learners still lack independence, they are unable to make their own decisions without the inputs of parents, They are mostly rebellious and would go against the parents advice and teachings, however the moment they are in trouble they require the parents bailout. They hardly take responsibility for their actions. From my experience I'll categorise this type of attachment as avoidant dismissive. There's dependency on parents but at the same time there's rebellion."*
>
> (Deputy principal participant, 1)

> *"From the top of my head, I can only think of dismissive, aggressive learners and confident learners. Dismissive learners are usually angry at life and they are scared of being rejected by their teachers and peers. This then takes away their confidence first in themselves and then others."* (Teacher participant, 6)

> *"Grade 10 learners possess a few attachments in our school such as… dismissive, secure and avoidant dismissive styes and because as we have a large group of grade10 learners they possess different attachment styles. Dismissive learners always want to hide in class and more of peer pleasers. They do not enjoy being embarrassed in class and before their peers."* (Teacher participant, 1)

Based on the interview excerpts provided, it can be contended that insensitivity and lack of communication contribute to negative perceptions in children. As previously noted, children have a strong inclination to establish a connection with their caregivers. This demonstrates that despite being in challenging home environments, such as those characterized by avoidant attachment, some children nevertheless want to establish secure attachments in order to fulfil their emotional and inherent needs.

5.2.3 Theme 3: *Anxious attachment style*

Children with anxious insecure attachment may have a desire for contact, but they do not seem to find comfort in it. They may exhibit passive, whiny, fussy, helpless, or immature behaviour and display resistance towards the attachment figure. Anxious children frequently form attachments with individuals who have a background characterized by abuse, drug use, sadness, or experiences of loss such as death or divorce (Carlson 1998). During stressful conditions, middle adolescents may exhibit a significant dependency on their attachment figure, struggle with separation, display excessive worry about the location of their attachment figure, and find it challenging to recover from upsetting experiences (Chopik, Edelstein & Fraley, 2013). The interview excerpts revealed that two of the learner participants exhibited anxious attachment patterns, which is consistent with the research addressed earlier. During the interviews, the learners revealed instances of emotional and physical abuse experienced at home, a strong inclination towards emotional well-being, a heightened sensitivity in their nervous system, and the presence of trauma. The following are the interview excerpts that were obtained from participants:

> *"The relationship at home is bad as we are controlled by the owner of the house which is my grandmother. She always treats us bad tell us bad words [painful words] but my mom tries to make us feel better and happy. My grandmothers first born is always drunk, he kicks us out of his mother's house. I even have a cousin who is addicted to Nyaope (drugs) and when he has taken it, he beats me up but I hide my pain. My mother is trying to find a place of us to live in peace."* (Learner participant, 10)

> *"For now, safety and protection does exist in my situation but it cannot be guaranteed if that it will 100% safe because +14 years ago to be approximate our house was once invaded and attempted to be burnt into ashes by an estranged culprit. This has caused me to be extra careful with everything as I'm always scared."* (Learner participant, 11)

In addition, two teachers observed that grade 10 learners who originate from homes lacking emotional care likely to exhibit evidence of anxious attachment patterns and display disruptive behaviour in class. According to one teacher, grade 10 pupils often struggle with confidence, as it has not yet been established or cultivated in them.

> *"My Grade 10 learners possess anxious attachment style. Majority of learners in school suffer from separation distress where they experience anxiety that occurs in the absence*

of the attachments figure, and most parents do not really know their children and are absent emotionally for their children which leads to learners being disruptive in the classroom. Most learners are raised by young single parents and some do not know their parents" (Teacher participant, 3)

"They have an anxious insecure style, very fearful and the fear is also created by the nature of subjects they have chosen because they are not familiar with FET as yet, so it creates that anxiety in the class. Their confidence is not so high at this age. They are still battling with it and trying to find their feet." (Teacher participant, 4)

Based on the interviews with the learner participants, it is clear that one learner has a highly responsive nervous system, which prevents them from being able to relax and constantly reminds them of their past traumas. The other learner has difficulty expressing their pain and therefore conceals instances of abuse, possibly due to feeling hopeless about their situation. According to literature, the anxious attachment style is distinct from other attachment styles since it centres around the traumatic histories and present experiences of children. These children have little agency over these tragic events, which subsequently have a detrimental impact on them (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). In addition, Alhusen et al., (2013) suggest that insecure attachment patterns have the potential to be modified over time through the influence of secure working models, such as effective intervention programs.

5.2.4 Theme 4: *Disorganised/ Fearful attachment style*

This ultimate attachment form is a fusion of both anxious and fearful attachment styles. Within this category, children exhibit a tendency to avoid forming close relationships and are prone to sudden outbursts of intense anger and hatred. Additionally, they struggle with effectively regulating their negative emotions. They may exhibit volatile behaviour, such as initiating physical altercations and damaging objects in their vicinity. These children struggle to establish a bond with their caregivers because they experience significant levels of dread and anxiety, which result from the caregivers' insufficient responsiveness and sensitivity, including a lack of tolerance. The interview excerpts revealed that just one out of the 18 learners who participated exhibited a disorganized attachment style, which is consistent with the research reviewed earlier. During the interviews, one learner conveyed feelings of anger resulting from his family's lack of empathy.

"My family relationship is good for the 3 of them (mum, dad, brother) but with me it is a different story reason being, I do not get the same treatment as my younger brother does, he receives all the love my parents give but I don't even get the little bit of that and I am always angry. I try by all means to make them happy or rather proud but nothing is ever enough. In everything that I do they always have to look for mistakes that I did not do purposely just to make me look bad, and it is mostly done by my mother and all those things makes me feel less of a human being and I feel like I am a burden in their lives." (Learner participant, 15)

Furthermore, interview excerpts revealed the encounters of two deputy principals with disorganized learners in their school who exhibit bad behaviour as a means of dealing with the lack of care and responsiveness from their caregivers. The following points were discussed: "…Learners here, are very naughty, violent, mischievous as they are involved in drugs just to cope with any type of lack at home and the absence of parents..." (Deputy principal participant, 3). One more deputy principal commented on aggressive behaviour of learners from disorganized attachment style, and this is what they had to say:

"Grade 10 learners can be very defensive or aggressive when driven to a corner. Often for learners it easier to be involved in a tussle or a fight at the intermediate phase of learning, the same reaction is minimised at the start of the FET phase. Much more sensitivity and development by learners starts to manifest at this stage and they show a level of understanding leaning towards an increased sense of responsibility. The obverse attitude is also true should a learner be triggered into a fight or flight mode; the grow aggressive, defensive, lying and even devil-may-care in their conduct, which could demonstrate disorganisation and avoidant. They indeed develop a variety of attachments depending on the lead from their caregivers."

(Deputy principal participant, 2)

"Grade 10 learners possess a few attachments styles in our school such as disorganized, dismissive, secure and fearful because as we have a large group of grade10 learners they possess different attachment styles. Disorganized children tend to be violent, aggressive with others and they tend to be the bullies of the school."

(Teacher participant, 1)

From the findings presented above, the disorganized attachment style, along with other insecure attachment patterns, requires greater attention in schools. Based on the interview findings, the learner's behaviour and overall social and emotional development are significantly affected by the caregivers' lack of sensitivity and availability. These learners lack recognition and assistance from their families, and as a result, they may exhibit violent, mischievous, and rebellious behaviour due to feelings of anger and confusion. The upcoming topics delved more into the various factors and consequences of insecure bonds.

5.3: Findings on factors contributing to parent-child attachment patterns among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng West township schools

The study also examined the factors that contribute to the patterns of attachment between parents and children among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng West township schools. The thematic analysis revealed that specific factors were linked to the establishment of safe parent-child relationships, while distinct ones were connected with insecure parent-child attachment patterns.

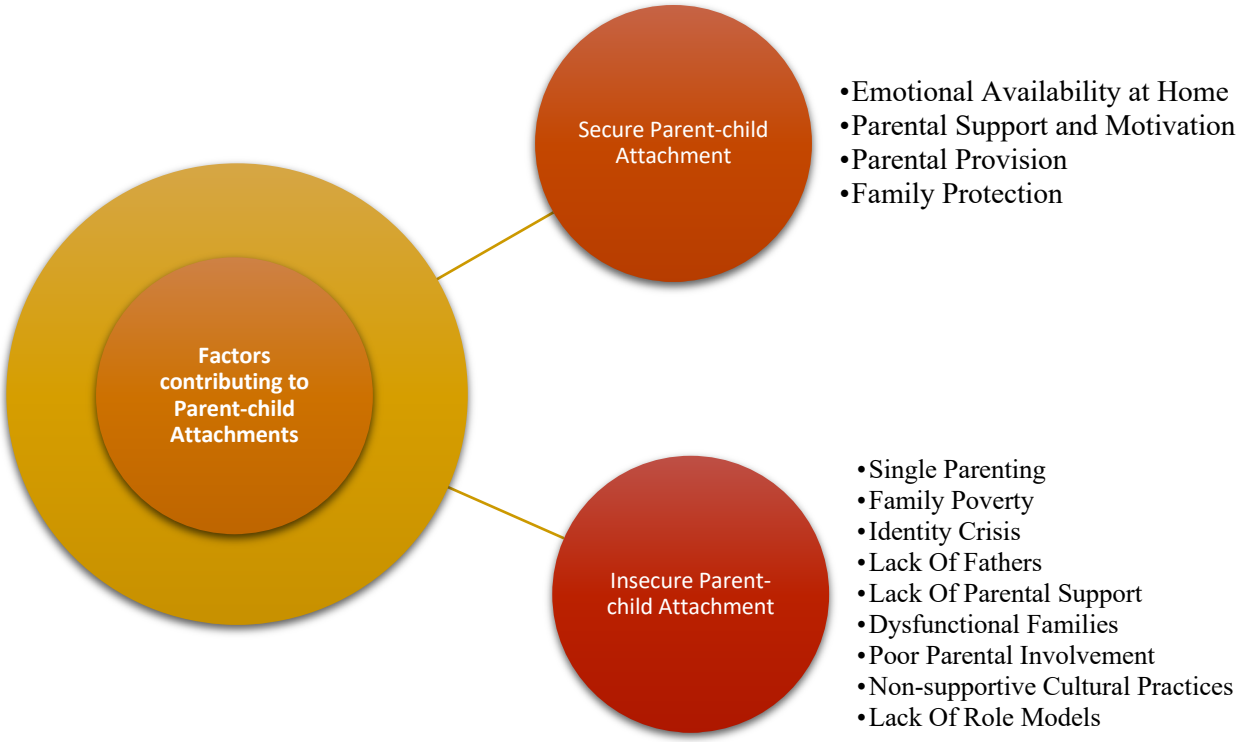


Figure 1: *Factors contributing to parent-child attachments*

5.3.1 FINDINGS ON FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PARENT-CHILD ATTACHMENT PATTERNS AMONG GRADE 10 LEARNERS IN SEDIBENG WEST TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

This section presents the five factors that have been found from research results as contributing to a secure attachment. The elements encompassed emotional accessibility within the household, parental assistance and drive, parental provision and oversight, and family safeguarding. Based on the evidence examined, it was evident that a secure attachment style in children led to the development of strong cognitive abilities and resilience. In addition, the child's secure attachment was influenced by factors such as the parent's physical presence, effective communication, prompt responsiveness, and the parent's understanding of the child's needs. These factors contributed to the child's confidence and reassurance.

Theme	Number of Learners	Number of Teachers	Number of Deputy Principals
1. Emotional availability at home	04	Nil	Nil
2. Parental support and motivation	01	03	-
3. Parental provision	01	02	Nil
4. Family protection	03	-	-

Table 2: *Summary of themes on factors that contribute to secure attachment style among grade 10 learners*

5.3.1.1 Theme 1: *Emotional availability at home*

Emotional availability (EA) is of great importance in the domestic setting. Emotional availability refers to the extent to which a caregiver and a kid openly express their emotions

and are receptive to each other's emotions (Biringen, 2000). Biringen's (2000) study also demonstrated that 'feeling' serves as a reliable indicator of the parent-child bond. The following excerpts unveiled the emotional intelligence of caregivers in their own homes. Four learners perceive their caregivers as accessible, providing comfort and affection, and experiencing their presence and a mutually beneficial exchange of feelings. Learners experience a strong emotional bond with their families and are able to engage in open and unrestricted communication with them. One learner commented on the presence and comfort they exoerience from home. *"I stay with my parents and 3 siblings that come after me. I feel comforted by the presence of my parents and I'm securely attached child I feel loved because I have someone to rely on."* (Learner participant, 3).

Furthermore, learner 6, 14 and 18 also shared the same sentiments about their families:

> *"I stay with my parents, my two elder sisters, my twin and my niece. I have a family that is functional and always there for me. I am a first born and a first granddaughter I am always the one who gets lifted with my cousins and my little sister's problems but in other hand they wish I could be a good example to them."* (Learner participant, 6)

> *"I stay with both my parents and my new born little sister. I am more closely attached to my parents and I tell them whatever problem I have so I can say we have a secure attachment with each other."* (Learner participant, 14)

> *"I stay with my aunt, my twin brother and two of my cousins which are my aunt's children. My mom passed and my dad ran away. My aunt gives me the love that I need and I can talk to her because she can understand me that what kind of a person I am, she can communicate with me."* (Learner participant, 18)

The interview excerpts clearly demonstrate that learners who reside with their siblings, parents, and extended family members in their houses receive emotional affection, assistance, and direction in their physical, behavioural, and emotional growth. Consequently, this results in the development of a secure connection, which plays a crucial role in defining their lives and promoting emotional and psychological well-being.

5.3.1.2 Theme 2: *Parental support and motivation*

Parental support and motivation are another factor that positively helps the development of a secure attachment type. Parental support has been found to have a significant impact on adolescents' motivation to accomplish. Parental support includes the provision of guidance, effective communication, and genuine interest demonstrated by parents to enhance the academic advancement of their children in school (Acharya & Joshi, 2011). In his book published in 2010, Gary Chapman emphasizes the need of comprehending support and drive as a love language. Chapman (2010) contends that providing support and motivation can elevate and reassure individuals, and it is crucial to communicate this in a clear and frequent manner. Biringen (2000) additionally asserts that the caregiver's assistance conveys encouragement and acceptance to the youngster. According to the research findings, one learner reported receiving assistance even though they come from a large family where help may be considered unlikely. One learner participant reported that:

> *"At home I stay with my mother, my two little sisters, my one little brother, my aunt, my two uncles and my grandmother. It is a big family, my father left us. The way I am being treated I really appreciate it because my mom supports me through everything even though sometimes my uncle likes to yell at me and talk to me like I am not his daughter but I really appreciate my mom."* (Learner participant, 4)

Evidence from teachers' research aligns with the existing literature. When surveyed, instructors identified motivation, attention, and support as key characteristics that contribute to the development of a secure attachment style and emotional well-being in children. One educator additionally contended that children who receive assistance are more inclined to attain superior academic performance. *"...Motivation and attention. Parental and guardian care and family stability because having parents offering support and motivation for the learners result in learners displaying secure attachments."* (Teacher participant, 1). Another educator also added their knowledge on support, *"Yes, they are. For example, studies show that children who receive love and support (whether academic or social) at home often do better in school, whereas children who are neglected at home do badly."* (Teacher participant 5).

One more interview excerpt from a teacher is presented below:

"Child feels protected, comforted, valued, supported by family which develops a secure attachment by having nonverbal emotional interaction such as always reassuring learners that they are loved. Parental involvement is important because it creates a more positive experience for children which helps them to perform better at school and it makes them feel at peace with their abilities." (Teacher participant, 2)

Based on the interview excerpts provided above, it is evident that parental motivation and encouragement can significantly enhance a child's development and instil the confidence to explore the world, as they are assured of constant companionship. Furthermore, it has been verified that providing youngsters with support, affection, and appreciation contributes to their development of stable attachment and a favourable perspective on life.

5.3.1.3 Theme 3: *Parental provision of basic needs*

According to the evidence studied, many communities in the Sedibeng West district consider the provision of basic requirements to be a privilege. According to Richards and Thompsons (2017), basic needs encompass the essential necessities that a family requires for private consumption, such as sufficient food, shelter, clothes, and durable domestic equipment and furnishings, which contribute to long-term physical well-being. Families who are unable to achieve the minimum needs mentioned above are classified as impoverished. Based on the results, learners who receive necessities from their parents have their physical well-being adequately addressed and feel secure in this aspect. This is what a secure learner participant 8 had to say about the provision of basic needs:

"At home I stay with both my aunt, grandparents and my 2 siblings. My communication with my parents is very secure, safe and I am well looked after. My aunt works two jobs to make sure that I am well fed and I am never in lack. My granddad as old as he is, he makes sure that I have nice clothes and buys me goodies." (Learner participant, 8)

Based on the information provided, the learner's basic needs are adequately provided for. In addition, two teacher participants expressed the belief that parents' involvement in promoting children's physical well-being and development is an additional means of being responsive and accessible, therefore fostering secure attachment.

"What contributes to secure attachment is the type of relationship children have with their parents. a positive consistent relationship. And how parents respond to their children's needs. Are they parents who are present or there to give money to their kids needs or are they actually showing interest in their lives." (Teacher participant, 4)

"The presence of both parents and caring siblings. Parent or guardian involvement also contributes to the child's growth. The presence of money to meet basic needs. The confidence that the child is loved by family and friends makes the child to be unstoppable and less fearful." (Teacher participant, 6)

The above findings emphasizes the significance of providing basic needs as a contributing element to establishing a strong bond. When parents or guardians assume the responsibility of providing for the physical needs of children, they are essential for their overall well-being and crucial for their growth and development. The presence of caregivers who can fulfil essential requirements plays a role in establishing a strong bond.

5.3.1.4 Theme 4: *Family Protection*

According to literature, it is observed that infants and children develop strong emotional connections with the individuals they depend on for safety and assistance (Tomlinson & Murray, 2010). It has also been established that children who receive comfort and protection by staying close to their caregivers are more likely to survive until secondary education and adulthood (Mikulincer, Shaver, Sapir-Lavid, & Avihou-Kanza, 2009). Ensuring the safety and security of one's family is highly important in this context. Furthermore, when families act as guardians against harm and provide a secure refuge, children are able to confidently investigate their surroundings. Based on the research findings, three participants who are committed to learning expressed their confidence in the security measures they have in place at home, which contributes to their overall sense of safety and well-being. Based on the data, it can be concluded that children can perceive when they are being shielded and provided with a sense of security. This is what one learner had to say: *"I stay with both my parents and my sister. I am safe, secure and also protected. But we did overcome a sad past together as a family after losing one of us*." (Learner participant, 16).

Learner participant 12 exhibits a stable attachment type, as seen by their strong proximity and communication with their parents.

> *"...My parents take discipline as an aspect of the relationship between them and I to keep me safe and protected they expect me to be the perfect child that does no mistake in life and when I ask them why they are acting that way they just say it is their way of keeping me safe and protected of the dangers of this earth and they are preparing me for the future and to not panic if I come across some hardships of life."* (Learner participant, 12)

> *"I stay with my grandparents, my mother, my three siblings and my uncle, I have never stayed with my dad but our attachment is one special attachment where everyone feels safe when they are around each other and very much protected within the family."*
>
> (Learner participant, 17)

Based on the interview data, it is clear that secure learners who lived with both parents and/or extended families had improved living conditions in terms of safety, access to resources, supervision, presence of caregivers, and communication openness. These learners exhibit superior adaptation compared to youngsters from dysfunctional household situations.

5.3.2 FINDINGS ON FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO INSECURE ATTACHMENT STYLES AMONG GRADE 10 LEARNERS

In this theme, 8 factors that contribute to insecure attachment styles have been identified from research findings and are discussed at length. These factors include single parenting and fatherlessness, dysfunctional families and conflict, poverty, lack of parental support and involvement, non-supportive cultural practices, lack of parental love and identity crisis and lack of role models. The literature reviewed indicates these negative factors can pose great risk to an individual's mental and physical health. It puts children at increased risk for alcoholism, smoking, illegal drug use, high risk of depression and engaging in violent acts towards others and self (Clare, 2006).

Theme	Number of Learners	Number of Teachers	Number of Deputy Principals
1. **Single parenting**	02	-	01
2. **Lack of father figures**	03	-	-
3. **Dysfunctional families**	01	02	01
4. Family **poverty**	01	03	01
5. Lack of parental support	-	01	02
6. Poor parental involvement	-	03	-
7. Non-supportive cultural practices	-	-	01
8. Lack of parental love	-	01	-
9. Lack of role models	-	-	02
10. Identity crisis	-	-	01

Table 3: *Summary of themes on factors that contribute to insecure attachment style among grade 10 learners*

5.3.2.1 Theme 1: *Single Parenting*

At this time, families consisting of a single parent are becoming increasingly prevalent and popular in South Africa as well as at other places throughout the world. In addition, the prevalence of adolescent moms and single mothers who are responsible for parenting their children from birth onward is significantly higher. According to the findings of a study that was

conducted by Gringlas and Weinraub (1995), adolescents who were raised by single mothers had a greater number of behavioural issues, a lower level of social competence, and a worse level of academic achievement than children who married parents raised. In addition to reporting higher levels of stress, single mothers expressed lower levels of satisfaction with the emotional supports they received. This had an impact on the outcomes of their children and made them more susceptible to harm. According to the data, two learners who had attachment styles that are indicative of insecurity (as discussed in earlier topics) have reported coming from families with only one parent. The interview excerpts can be seen below:

> *"I stay with a single parent which is my mother. She sometimes breaks my heart by saying hurtful words to me which makes me feel like a failure at times but I take time to forgive her. We fight a lot over small things but I love her so much that I don't want to lose her. I want her to see my success and all her hard work raising me without a father."* (Learner participant, 5)

> *"I stay with my grandparents, my aunt and two little sisters. I don't have parents. I wish my parents were still alive. I always compare myself to my friends who have parents and this makes me dislike talking about myself at school. I feel ashamed."*
>
> (Learner participant, 13)

In addition, one deputy principal was of the opinion that children who are raised by a single parent are more likely to have feelings of insecurity, and that this, in turn, prevents them from having the opportunity to have the entire experience of being raised by both parents. The interview excerpt can be seen below:

> *"Lack of proper parenting from home, in many cases learners have single parents raising them, mostly being young mothers. When learners get to the teenage stage, they display insecurities as they do not have the experience the parenting of both parents, a boy learner will for instance not be sure how to react to male teachers as he never experienced interaction with hist father." (Deputy Principal participant, 1)*

Within the scope of this subtheme, both single parenting and the absence of both parents were shown. It is possible to prove that these learners experience feelings of shame and burden as a result of the fact that they did not have the option and privilege of being raised by their parents.

Both of these events contain tragic elements. The preceding discussion brings to light the challenges that come with being raised by a single parent and grandparents. These challenges, which may also be seen as insecurities, play a role in the manner in which children form their realities and the attachment style that they adopt.

5.3.2.2 Theme 2: *Lack of father figures*

This subtheme took a thorough look at the role that both parents play in a child's life, as well as the potential drawbacks and repercussions that may be linked with the absence of father figures. Literature is frequently used to support the idea that both parents play an important role in a child's life. Castetter (2020) indicated that feelings of loss, abandonment, and neglect can result in the formation of emotional wounds that manifest as low self-esteem, self-doubt, and a lack of trust in children. When children are raised without the assistance of both of their parents, some implications follow in terms of their development (Castetter, 2020). According to the conclusions of the research, it is clear that learners harbor animosity toward their fathers who are not present in their lives.

> *"I stay with my mother, my sister and my younger baby sister. My mother understands me and she supports and encourages me to do good. In the previous years I also lived with my grandmother who had her life cut short. I don't know where my dad is and I ask myself a lot of questions and this sometimes causes me not to focus on my school work as I should. I keep moving from place to place."* (Learner participant, 9)

> "*I stay with my mother, my elder sister and her son. I don't have a father. And sometimes I do feel depressed and abandoned by my father who does not maintain me and my mother does not work. We always fight because I like buying clothes and the grant money is not enough."* (Learner participant, 11)

> *"I live with my mother, my 2 siblings and my niece. My dad stays with another family. The only person that makes sure that I am secure is my mother she is overprotective but my father could care less my father only cares about his step kids he makes sure they are safe but as for me, his biological daughter he does not care about me or what I need.*

I resent him for this and it hurts me every day." (Learner participant, 7)

The samples from the interviews that were presented earlier make it quite clear that the absence of father figures or fatherlessness, as depicted in the aforementioned excerpts, is a burden that learners must contend with. According to the aforementioned, the absence of father figures is not only a consequence of death but also the absence of fathers, which causes learners to feel resentment against their home environments and to wonder who they are. This causes children to have an insecure attachment, which in turn causes them to have internal conflicts and makes it difficult for them to function in school.

5.3.2.3 Theme 3: *Dysfunctional Families*

The term "family dysfunctionality" can be defined in a straightforward fashion as the failure of a family to function in a healthy manner as a result of unresolved conflict, child neglect, misbehavior, or ongoing abuse. Children who are raised in such households may have the perception that this phenomenon is typical. The learner participant, who is 15 years old, was recognized as a disorganized attached learner in the previous topics. Based on the excerpt from their interview, it can be established that the learner has encountered dysfunctions at home, which has caused him to be angry and misbehave at school. In comparison to his brother, one of the children in the family feels neglected, unwanted, and uncared for, as demonstrated by the excerpt from the interview. The family has not dealt with these specific family dynamics.

> *"Well, I can say my family is dysfunctional, like I said, I do not get the same treatment as my younger brother does, I feel he is more loved than me. My mother makes me feel less of a human being and I feel like I am a burden in their lives. She does not support me or care about me. I am angry."* (Learner participant, 15)

Furthermore, approximately two out of every six teachers who took part in the study held the belief that family dysfunctions are the result of a dysfunctional family structure in which children are not provided with emotional support or are led to believe that they are of little importance. One person who was a deputy principal was of the opinion that the learners who were addressed before "lack love, support, and a good experience of having a good and

functional home." This participant was in agreement with all of the aforementioned statements. You may view the excerpts from the interview down below:

> "*Broken family structure is one of the socio-economic issue most of our learners are faced with and it affects teaching and learning in negative way most caregivers for our learners do not help our learners with homework, extra activities and they only come to school if a learner is misbehaving."* (Teacher participant, 2)

> "*One issue is that most parents still believe that a child should be taken care of financially. Emotionally the child will take care of themselves. Example most parents come to school only to collect reports cards and not check whether their child is coping emotionally in the grade their doing. During the year no one checks the books of most learners and only wait for final results whether the child passed or failed the grade."*
>
> (Teacher participant, 3)

> *"Learners coming from dysfunctional families; absence of one parent be it the mother or the father and worst cases, both, learners who are orphans, negligence due to drinking by parents, history of abuse especially of a sexual nature. These children lack love, support and a good experience of having a good and functional home. Not having one parent is already a disadvantage as that mean the family is short of one salary, one brain to help with parenting and help raise the child."*
>
> (Deputy principal participant, 2)

As a result of the findings presented above, it is possible to conclude that the structures of families play a significant part in the upbringing of children because they can either contribute to a secure or insecure attachment style. Whenever children are not provided with emotional support or reassurance that they are loved, they have a tendency to lose faith in the people who are responsible for their care or trust in themselves.

5.2.3.4 Theme 4: *Family Poverty*

In the context of this piece of content, "poverty" refers to the circumstance in which an individual does not have the financial means and resources to achieve their fundamental requirements. According to Casandy et al., (2001), poverty can be caused by a variety of life

events, including the loss of a parent's work or a lack of financial means. Following that, we discussed the psychological, social, and economic factors that contributed to poverty, as well as the repercussions that it had. This was in recognition of the work that Dieltiens and Meny-Gibert (2012) have done, in which they argued that poverty also has an effect on how people perceive themselves and how they participate in society. As a consequence, poverty may limit a parent's ability to respond to the needs of their child, which in turn may have an effect on the quality of attachment (Wray, 2015). Children who are raised in families that are economically disadvantaged are more likely to be exposed to many sources of stress, which can lead to insecure attachments in the interactions between parents and children as well as more difficult parenting situations. In turn, this may have an effect on the quality of attachment (Wray, 2015 to be specific). According to Casandy et al. (2001), the stress of poverty and the lack of knowledge about child development that frequently accompany a lack of schooling may represent more direct pathways to insecure attachment. Poverty can make it difficult for a parent to meet the requirements of her kid and can be caused by a variety of life circumstances, including the loss of a job or a lack of financial means. According to Casandy et al. (2001), there is a possible correlation between poverty and an increased probability of experiencing unstable attachment. One learner participant reported that:

> *"I stay with my grandfather and aunt. I don't have parents and things are very difficult as home as we only rely on my grandfather's pension. My aunt doesn't work. Sometimes it is not possible to get everything I want for school or food in the house."*
>
> (Learner participant, 10)

According to the findings of the research, this learner's perceptions of their present and future lives have been influenced by their poverty. The circumstances of their homes are having a detrimental impact on their development, and they are aware that there is a void in their life that is not being filled, which is causing them to experience feelings of melancholy and worry. There is a consensus among the participants, both teachers and deputy principals, that children do not develop a positive and stable attachment when they are raised in houses where there is only one parent. This is what teacher 1 had to say:*"The main factor that contributes to insecure attachments style is social factors such as lifestyle choices, poverty, overcrowding homes and social inequality."* (Teacher participant ,1).

The following interview excepts were from teacher 5 and 6 and deputy principal 3:

"…Economically, lack of resources by both at school and home could also affect the children's learning experience. Some tasks require children to have extra reading materials, not only from school but at home as well therefore, children who come from financially disadvantaged background are negatively affected while those with good financial status have an advantage and stand a greater chance of having a productive schooling experience."

(Teacher participant, 5)

"This is a township school where we find learners coming from very disadvantaged background such as poverty and crime. What I have noticed to contribute to negative behaviour is poor self-esteem, especially learners who come from charity home or in poverty. This is largely exposed where learners wear casual clothes and every day in the classroom, where learners do not have lunch, pocket money and stationery. We have a feeding scheme and most learners who go there are ashamed. Learners cannot even afford school uniform where learners wear worn out clothes and fail to afford basic toiletries." (Teacher participant 6)

"Grade 10 learners are also influenced by a hybrid of factors at home. Based in an economically depressed environment such as our school, often the learner experience strife in its deepest forms, be it outright abject poverty family conflicts, child-headedness, single parent families and or unemployment amongst others. These home-based factors often have a negative bearing on a learner's general outlook towards life, leaving them with a feeling of listlessness and lack of drive in their learning encounter. Still, the same set of negative factors leave another learner with a big sense of resilience and will to overcome the odds and rise to the top."

(Deputy principal participant, 3)

The snippets from the interviews that were presented earlier make it abundantly clear that children who are raised in homes that are struggling financially are more likely to be exposed to negative stressors that led to the development of insecure attachments and more severe parenting conditions. According to Casandy et al. (2001), there is a possible correlation between poverty and an increased probability of experiencing insecure attachment.

5.3.2.5 Theme 5: *Lack of parental support*

The concept of parental support is not too dissimilar to that of love, and it may be defined as any good behavior toward the child, such as praising and encouraging the child, which conveys to the child that he or she is recognized and cared for. According to Mills, Mann, Smith, and others (2021), additional characteristics that indicate a high level of parental support on the part of parents include motivation, warmth, a readiness to guide, advice, and have honest conversations with their children. The literature suggests that children who are secure are willing to receive the required support from their caregivers and are willing to request assistance when they require it. At times when they are feeling distressed and overwhelmed, they interact honestly with others (Ubha & Cahill, 2014). As part of this subtheme, one deputy principal and one teacher participant had the opportunity to discuss their perspectives and experiences regarding the consequences of a lack of support from parents. The extracts from the interviews attached are presented below:

> *"Some learners have very poor academic support structure. And by this, I mean, some children do not have more knowledgeable individuals at home to assist with school related work. This could be due to historical educational disadvantages, and this speaks to the social aspect…"* (Deputy principal participant, 2)

> *"There are a quite a number of factors but the greatest factor that contributes to insecure attachments is that most grade 10 learners have young, inexperienced mothers lacking parental skills which result in learners being negatively affected when it comes to parental care. Most learners are exposed to excessive violence both at home, in school and public spaces. Having minimal support from family, poverty and hunger, having limited access to academic materials such as access to computers. The above affect teaching and learning."* (Teacher participant, 2)

From the findings of the research conducted by teachers and one deputy principal, it is possible to draw the conclusion that support is required in order to hasten the growth of the pupil under consideration. When it comes to providing assistance for their children's lives, however, there are some parents in township schools who struggle with a lack of information. As a result of a lack of parental skills, which leads to a lack of parental care, the participants presented above believed that parents do not demonstrate a significant amount of interest and support in the

growth of their children. One final point to consider is that it is possible to prove that families with a limited or non-existent educational background are less likely to provide the essential academic assistance to their children.

5.3.2.6 Theme 6: *Poor parental involvement*

Parental involvement is an important element of effective education for children and this involvement includes playing with children, helping with homework, listening to children read, speak, discussing school events and attending school meetings (Hornby and Ian Blackwell, 2018). This speaks to the active physical presence of parents in every child's cycle of development and continuous participation of a caregiver in the education of a child. However, Casandy et al., (2001) research revealed that non-western families with lower levels of education are less likely to hold beliefs about the importance of parental involvement to child development. And is due to stress of poverty and/or lack of knowledge. This subtheme, therefore presented the effects of poor parental involvement. Three teachers from 3 schools believed that lack of parental involvement affect the child's education and performance. Parents are expected to be fully involved in the development of the child, to support the learning and also identify gaps and challenges. The interview excerpts can be seen below:

> *"Theres quite a few parents who show interest in the development of their children. Example we had a parent's meeting and this one parent said "my child is in grade 10 and is responsible for their own learning so I give them money for them to go for extra classes on the weekend" only to find out that child has been bunking extra classes and the parent hasn't been checking the books and they only showed up because we had to talk about the child's poor performance and she told us that she wasn't aware of that. It is November now, how can a parent not be aware of their child's performance now? So, I would say they are not involved in their children's development."*
>
> (Teacher participant, 4)

> "*Parental involvement is important because it creates a more positive experience for children which help them to perform better at school and it makes them feel at peace with their abilities. Children feel protected, comforted, valued, supported by family which develops a secure attachment by having nonverbal emotional interaction such as always reassuring learners that they are loved."* (Teacher participant, 2)

"The type of relationship does children have with their parents, are they having a positive relationship? Is it consistent? And how parents respond to their children's needs. Are they parents who are present or there to give money to their kids needs or are they actually showing interest in their lives. Showing interest is far important."

(Teacher participant, 3)

According to the excerpts from the interviews that were shown earlier, it is possible to see that parents frequently have a misunderstanding of parental engagement because they only base it on financial considerations, but they do not participate physically or supervise their children's education. It has been brought to the attention of three educators that the lack of involvement of parents in their children's development has a negative impact on the academic achievement of the children in school. It is necessary to provide children with supervision and direction in order for them to develop in a manner that is both correct and expected.

5.3.2.7 Theme 7: *Non-supportive cultural practices*

There are a variety of cultural practices and/or traditions that are associated with specific geographical places. In the context of the customary practices of a specific ethnic group, the execution of a culture or tradition is referred to as a cultural practice. Cultures are the result of human labor and are frequently handed down from one generation to the next. There are, however, some cultural traditions that are not only enduring but also beneficial to development. When Tankersley (2022) discusses the components of social competence in her research, she draws reference to cultural norms. More specifically, she says, "We value honesty in our culture." We admire children for their ability to think in a flexible manner and for their compassionate characteristics. In order for children to develop these abilities, we need to provide them with opportunities to practice them in a variety of settings and interactions" (p3). Taking this into consideration, one could say that civilizations teach what they believe, and if a culture has a strong belief in honesty, then that belief will be passed down to children. Learners bring their cultural practices to school, according to the belief of one deputy principal participant from school 3, and sadly, if a practice does not assist the emotional growth of the learner, then the learner will be at a disadvantage in honour of their cultural practice. We can view the excerpt from the interview down below:

"Culture practiced dominant and beliefs held in the particular community play a role. Learners tend to bring these experiences and beliefs with them at school. The areas that learners come from, if it's a poverty-stricken area, it may cause learners to be despondent. The moral degeneration in the community, more of the wrong behaviour tends to be accepted." (Deputy principal participant, 3)

Based on the information presented above, it is considered that children who are dejected may be disappointed as a result of the environment in which they are raised and may lack hope to improve themselves. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance for parents to reject cultural practices that are not helpful, as these activities may contribute to children developing attachment styles that are insecure.

5.3.2.8 Theme 8: *Lack of parental love*

The feelings of affection, care, comfort, concern, nurture, and acceptance that a child receives from its caretakers are qualities that might be interpreted as parental love. When a parent hugs, reassures, or compliments their child, it is possible to sense the love that they have for their child. In order for children to develop physically and mentally, they require the care and nurturing of caregivers. According to Rohner, Khaleque, and Cournoyer (2008), when children do not receive the love of their parents, they experience feelings of rejection. It is common for adolescents to experience a lack of love from their parents, and the reasons for this might differ from child to child. According to Turner (2011), toddlers begin to exhibit signals of affection and desire love, attention, and physical touch with their caregivers from a young age. Furthermore, if children are denied of love, sensitivity, and comfort, they may be at danger of developing attachment styles that are insecure. One of the teachers who took part in the study was of the opinion that failing to receive affection from one's family should not be minimized because it can lead to a variety of fears in learners. this is what they had to say *"Learners who do not experience love from home tend to be very needy at schools and do not do well in friendships and groups. This is undermined yet so sensitive to the learners' growth, development and identity."* (Teacher participant, 6).

Based on the information presented above, it is possible to draw the conclusion that a lack of parental love can play a role in children developing a negative self-image, which in turn can

have an effect on how they perceive themselves, which in turn can lead to negative and insecure attachment styles. Learners who are shown affection at home are more likely to have a favourable self-image of themselves and to not go through an identity crisis, according to other themes.

5.3.2.9 Theme 9: *Lack of role models*

Someone once said, "It takes a village to raise a child." This is a saying that originates from Africa. It is important to note that this does not serve to discourage the involvement of parents, but rather to recognize that the entire community has the potential to positively contribute to the child's development. Because of this, having positive role models is quite important in order to portray an image of how a youngster ought to develop healthily. Role models are defined by Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995) as any relationship that develops during the course of a relationship. These relationships can range from tight, participatory partnerships to admiration or imitation of famous people. The list of people who fall into this category includes not just parents and siblings but also teachers, neighbors, and even public figures like politicians and celebrities. Two deputy principals were of the opinion that role models play an important part in the development of children, and that the absence of role models can therefore have a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of children. Pleiss and Feldhusen (1995) state that "Children can benefit from relationships with adults who are successful in their areas of interest" (p.151). One deputy principal believed that, and I quote *"Violence in general, lack of recreational facilities, lack of role models and over-exposure to negativity in society leaves a learner still at an impressionable stage such as a grade 10 learner with an insecure attachment."* (Deputy principal participant, 3)

Similarly one more deputy principal commented that lack of role models and poverty affect learner:

> *"These learners lack role models from home as their family members are affected by poverty and are not able to be perfect role models as they are either involved in crime or are suffering depression as a result of their financial state."* (Deputy principal participant, 1)

Based on the findings of the interviews described above, it is possible to conclude that poverty, violence, and crime are examples of societal concerns that have a detrimental impact on

learners. When youngsters are exposed to positive role models, particularly those that come from their own homes, it encourages them to strive for greater success in life. Children are inspired to aspire to greatness by positive role models, which in turn inspires learners to feel enthusiastic about the future.

5.3.2.10 Theme 10: *Identity crisis*

"An identity crisis is a developmental period that occurs during youth and adolescence. It is dependent on psychobiological factors that secure this basis for an organism's sense of vital selfhood," It is rooted in the stages of childhood and will depend on its preservation and regeneration from one period of life to the next. It extends into the past as well as into the future. It is necessary to take into consideration the sociological aspect of identity, which is the context in which an individual must locate themselves (Baumeister, Shapiro, & Tice, 1985, page 409). In light of this, Ubha and Cahill (2014) suggest that there is an urgent requirement to make the most of every opportunity in order to maximize the likelihood of children developing a positive self-image and identity. in particular if it was not possible for adolescents to do so in their earlier lives due to the fact that they had an unstable bond. Identification crisis is a result of home-based variables such as not receiving love from caregivers, which causes individuals to build a bad identity of themselves, as stated in the extracts from the interview of the interview. An excerpt from an interview with a deputy principal reveals that, if left unchecked, insecurities can contribute to an identity crisis: *"The identity crisis kicks in when a child does not which traits they acquired from their father/mother. The insecurities grow bigger from comparing themselves with those learners who come from families with both parents."* (Deputy principal participant, 1).

In light of the data shown above, it is clear that when learners struggle to maintain a positive self-image, they develop insecurities that ultimately lead to an identity crisis. As a result, identity crises might be understood as a consequence of uncontrolled and unresolved insecurities that learners develop in their homes.

5.4 FINDINGS ON THE SOCIAL COMPETENCES OF GRADE 10 LEARNERS FROM PARENT- CHILD ATTACHMENTS

The study also explored the social competences of grade 10 learners from parent-child attachments. The results from thematic analysis indicated that there are social competences that

are associated with parent-child secure attachment styles, but on the other hand, there are social incompetence that is associated with insecure parent-child attachment patterns. The findings on social competences are presented as follows:

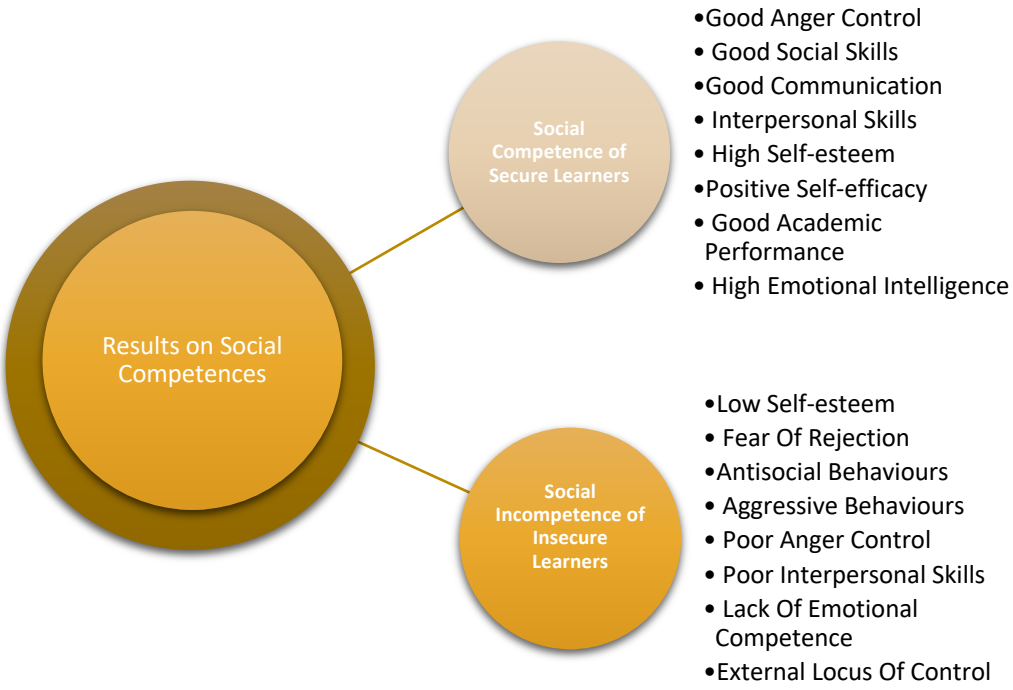


Figure 2: *Themes on social competences and incompetence of learners*

5.4.1 Findings on social competences of grade 10 learners with secure attachment style

Social competence is described as the product of a wide range of cognitive abilities, emotional processes, behavioural skills, social awareness, personal and cultural values related to interpersonal relationships (Orpinus, 2010). It can be understood as how individuals view themselves, solve problems, relate and care for others. Social competence is seen is small instances like sharing of food of stationary, celebrating others and kindness. The results from participants revealed eight social competence skills (SCS) and this theme further doubled clicked on that. Thus, the results indicated that the themes on social competences include good anger control, good social skills, good communication, interpersonal skills, high self-esteem, positive self-efficacy, good academic performance and high emotional intelligence. These themes are presented, discussed, and interpreted as follows:

Theme	Number of Learners	Number of Teachers	Number of Deputy Principals
1. Good anger control	02	Nil	Nil
2. Good social skills	03	-	-
3. Good communication	01	-	-
4. Interpersonal skills	01	01	-
5. High self-esteem	-	02	-
6. Positive self-efficacy	-	01	-
7. Good academic performance	-	01	-
8. High emotional intelligence	-	-	01

Table 4: *Summary of themes on social competences of grade 10 learners with secure attachment style*

5.4.1.1 Theme 1: *Good anger control*

Effective anger management, as outlined by the American Psychological Association (2022), encompasses both the regulation of outward behavior and the control of internal emotions. This involves implementing strategies to lower heart rate, achieve a state of calmness, and allow negative sensations to dissipate. Participants who have a secure attachment style have a good ability to regulate their anger and do not easily react badly to anger, according to the findings of the interviews that were conducted with respondents. One of the participants in the learning process stated that they use TikTok to create material in order to keep their temper under control. The following excerpts from the interview are reported as follows: "I keep my cool and calm by making Tik-Tok videos because it helps me control my anger." I get to interact with a lot of people and have a good time doing it. Additionally, it assists me in becoming the finest communicator possible and in posting my photographs in order to ensure that you become more

well-known and popular" (Learner participant, 1). You can view the following snippets from the interviews with learner participants 12 and 18 respectively:

> *"When I feel angry with a fellow learner before I react negatively, I calm myself down. That is the most important thing I need to do first then when I am calm, I would try to respond in a much polite way. My mum taught me this."* (Learner participant, 12)

> *"I manage my anger by always smiling and I do not tolerate nonsense. I do not like being found with groups of people who look down upon others such as bullies. No. I believe we are all here to learn and not make each other angry."* (Learner participant, 18)

Based on the findings from the interview excerpts presented above, it is evident that learners who were raised in homes with stable attachments have acquired the skill of mastering anger management by the time they are teens. These learners are able to control their anger by channelling their energy into other activities, such as creating content, avoiding bullies at school, and smiling to reduce their anger reactions. Anger is a natural emotion that cannot be avoided. Learners found it much simpler to restrain their anger when confronted with challenging circumstances if they made these behavioural choices. As a result, it is possible to draw the conclusion that effective anger management is a component of effective emotional and social competence, given that this is a skill that learners are working to improve.

5.4.1.2 Theme 2: *Good social skills*

Social skills refer to the aptitudes that allow individuals to establish connections, acquire knowledge, foster positive relationships, and engage with society in a mutually advantageous way. Having social skills is crucial for individuals to effectively initiate and maintain positive relationships with others. The maintenance of friendships is another important aspect that requires several of these skills (Tankersley, 2022). Learners who are secure have high social abilities, such as the capacity to communicate, relate well with others, and socialize, according to the results of the interviews with the participants who were secure. The second learner participant disclosed that they are courteous and never impolite while engaging with other people. *"I would say that I am able to socialize and communicate with people," the learner participant stated. I am a very kind person, and I*

never treat other people in a nasty manner or bring them discomfort. Although I am able to control my anger, I never feel furious. Each and every time, I demonstrate or convey the most favourable sensations " another learner also commented on their favourable social skills *"I would explain my social skills as balanced as I am privileged to socialize and engage with other people and in terms of how I relate and interact with other learners."* (Learner participant, 8)

The following is a report of the interviews, except those with learner participants 3 and 4:

> *"My social skills are excellent as I easily relate with other learners and I don't have any grudges with anyone so in terms of anger luckily I am not short tempered as I am humble and I can easily control my anger."*
>
> (Learner participant, 3)

> *"I am good at socializing with other learners at school and I really enjoy their company. I do experience anger but I can control it but if I am angry, I just distance myself from anyone just to do some self-introspection."*
>
> (Learner participant, 4)

Based on the findings from the interview, with the exception of the ones mentioned above, it can be concluded that secure learners possess strong social skills. This is evidenced by their capacity to communicate and interact with people in a manner that is courteous. In addition, the findings demonstrated that these learners do not have a short fuse or are easily agitated into rage. It is possible to draw the conclusion that teenagers who possess strong social skills are able to demonstrate social competence, effectively manage their relationships, and coexist peacefully with others.

5.4.1.3 Theme 3: *Good communication skills*

Communication refers to the process of exchanging information and ideas, as well as the ability to express oneself and comprehend others. Barker (2010) asserts that effective communication skills encompass the utilization of suitable nonverbal cues during interpersonal interactions, as well as the acquisition of the aptitudes required to convey information in a manner that is both lucid and empathetic. Based on the findings of the interviews conducted with participants who were secure learners, it was discovered that learners are capable of communicating effectively

and have an understanding of the significance of having strong communication skills. A learner participant who was 14 years old stated that they have a strong ability to conceal their facial expressions when they observe something that they did not anticipate. They have an understanding that facial expressions are a component of communication for them. The interview excerpt is reported as follows:

> *"I communicate because that's like the main tool of social skills and I also try to build relationships and maintain good communication amongst other learners. I try to hide my facial expressions especially when I Immediately hear or see something that will turn my mood off or ruin the conversation."* (Learner participant, 14).

The interview excerpt of learner participant, 6 can be seen below:

> *"I am able to socialize and manage things together with other people because I can communicate well with others, I can control my anger and relate with other people and learn what I don't know in terms of my skills."* (Learner participant, 6)

The conclusion that can be drawn from the facts presented above is that secure learners are able to sustain positive relationships by actively cultivating their communication abilities. In addition, it is possible to show that learners who possess strong communication skills are better able to form positive relationships with other people and grow socially as adolescents.

5.4.1.4 Theme 4: *Good interpersonal skills*

Barakat (2006) defines interpersonal skills as crucial behavioural competencies involved in interacting and connecting with others, primarily in one-on-one interactions. These skills encompass qualities such as being helpful, compassionate, empathetic, tolerant, and courteous in both verbal communication and behaviour. Individuals with great interpersonal skills can create a welcoming environment for others. The discussions that took place between the participants of the learning experience regarding good interpersonal skills demonstrated that certain learners who are secure are aware of strong interpersonal skills because they make an effort to be courteous and sympathetic when interacting with other people. The seventeenth learner participant said that they are concerned about the emotions of other individuals and make an effort to create an atmosphere that is pleasant when engaging with other people: *"I*

do relate with other learners very well because I try to make others feel comfortable or free when I am with them. I like people who almost have the same personality or behaviour as mine." The interview excerpts of one teacher and learner participant are reported below:

> *"I would describe my social skills as how well I relate with other learners. I am very respectful towards my peers. I can manage to talk about life, but I enjoy being by myself than being with other learners. I find my peace within and I can study peacefully. I am confident and not scared to be alone."* (Learner participant, 16)

> *"I look at the overall participation of the child, this includes checking how often they participate in class discussions, how much effort they give to their assessments as well as how they behave with fellow learners both inside and outside the classroom. By observing how they behave with their peers during break, afterschool as well as during group and class discussion. Secure learners often engage with respect and consideration in class and with their peers."* (Teacher participant, 5)

Some teenagers are growing their interpersonal skills in school with other learners, according to the conclusions that were derived from the interview excerpts that were shown earlier. Learners can develop their social competence, which adds to their overall social wellness, through the behavioural choices comprised of being polite and kind towards other people. For learners to strengthen their interactions with other people, it is possible to conclude that interpersonal skills are crucial skills that they need to develop.

5.4.1.5 Theme 5: *High self-esteem*

According to Bailey (2003), self-esteem refers to an individual's perception of themselves. Simply described, it is the assessment of your personal value based on favourable self-perceptions. The interview excerpts from teacher participants on their experiences with learners was that secure learners have a good self-esteem and are confident in themselves. They participate and engage well in class with no fear for what others might think of them, the interview excepts from two teachers are reported below: *"Secure learners are very much content and confident. Social competent learners are productive learners who participate in social activities*." (Teacher participant, 1*).*

Another teacher participant commented on social competence of secure learners in class:

> *"The difference would be in the level of confidence in the classroom those who are secure would raise their hands in the classroom and give answers in the classroom. A secure learner sees an opportunity to improve whenever they are not doing well. Even in the professional relationship between a secure learner and a teacher you would see that the secure learner would consult if they need help but the insecure one you need to get them to do some work. A learner who is socially competent you see them with how they interact with other learners so I'd you place them in a group they would still be functional so those learners are sociable they are able to act with their own peers. Also in presentation you would find the socially competent learners are able to present in the entire class where else the other may not be able to do that."* (Teacher participant, 4)

According to the findings presented above, it is clear that children who have high self-esteem are confident in themselves. This confidence enables them to be productive in their schoolwork, consult with the teacher when they require assistance, and participate actively in the classroom. Furthermore, this confidence enables them to see areas in which they can improve in terms of their overall development as learners. As a result, it is possible to conclude that strong self-esteem, which is synonymous with confidence, is one of the variables that contribute to the social competence of children. This is because teachers can recognize and encourage this trait in the children they teach.

5.4.1.6 Theme 6: *Positive self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy is the term used to describe an individual's conviction in their ability to undertake certain behaviors that are required to achieve specified goals or outcomes (Bandura, 1997). In essence, a positive self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their own cognitive abilities to achieve excellence and perform successfully in an academic setting. The interview results from participants revealed that secure learners show high levels of positive self-efficacy, a total belief and confidence over their school work. Two teachers claimed that secure learners are self-assured and they ask lots of questions in class are work well in groups. Teacher participant, 4 claimed that, efficacious learners are always on time for their school submissions:

"Secure learners in my class turn to ask a lot of questions sometimes not even raising their hand and willing to try new things. Social competent are learners who follow the teacher's directions and work well in a group and lastly do their classwork, homework, assignment in time. Learners who come from a complete family (both parents) are present and they show high social skills, and self-efficacy. I think this behaviour is observed at home".

The interview excerpt from teacher 2 is reported below:

"A secure learner has confidence and is more self-assured that they will pass at the end of the year. Social competent student executes positive skills works constructively in groups, with respect for others and expressing appreciation for others. In my perspective we can tell by the respect given to school work the kind of home a learner is actively from."

(Teacher participant, 2)

Learners who originate from secure households have a higher level of self-efficacy and are encouraged to have confidence in themselves in order to achieve success in school, according to the conclusions that were derived from the snippets of interviews that were shown earlier. These learners are able to completely engage in class, ask questions, and submit assessments because they have the notion that they will perform well. This confidence that they possess enables them to do so. Therefore, it is possible to draw the conclusion that self-efficacy is essential for learners since it assists them in determining what goals they wish to pursue and in believing that they have the capability to achieve those goals.

5.4.1.7 Theme 7: *Good academic performance*

Academic performance achievement refers to the degree to which a learner, teacher, or institution has successfully reached their educational objectives, whether they are short-term or long-term. This achievement is evaluated by ongoing assessment (Tadese, Yeshaneh, & Mulu, 2022). The interview results showed that secure learners tend to do well in their studies and teacher participant 6, claimed that secure learners are comfortable to try out any activity and are goal oriented.

"Secure learners are usually respectful, kind and performing well academically. They speak their mind and feel comfortable to try out any activity and ask for help where they struggle. Most of them have realised their talents and are goal oriented."

(Teacher participant, 6)

The findings above, reveal that because secure learners are confident to try out any activity given to them, it makes it easier for that to perform well in their academics. Their ability to ask questions where they struggle assist them to be perform well academically as they are also able to speak. It can be concluded therefore, that good academic performance is a cognitive skill that forms part of social competence that is necessary for learners to perform well in school and be confident to further explore their talents and set more goals for themselves.

5.4.1.8 Theme 8: *High emotional intelligence*

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and regulate one's emotions and understand the emotions of others. It centres around self-management, self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management (Segal, 2015). The interview of one deputy principal revealed that secure learners have emotional intelligence (EQ) as they are able have the ability to communicate effectively, overcome challenges and defuse conflict. The interview excerpt is reported below:

> *"Judging by the socio-economic setting of their backgrounds, these learners are quite resilient judging by their conduct and ability to respond to instruction. They demonstrate a positive attitude in class, in the sports field and in their relationships with each other and can resolve conflict. There is also a display of a healthy development in emotional intelligence, albeit not paralleled by a requisite IQ. It is important, however, to note that lack of proper diet does contribute in cheating a child of its true natural potential, mentally and physically."* (Deputy principal participant, 3)

A happy attitude, the capacity to judge situations, and the ability to respond properly are all indicators that secure learners are improving their emotional intelligence. The data from the interview extract that was presented earlier indicate that secure learners are developing them. The fact that learners are able to manage and control their emotions is demonstrated by the behavioural impacts that they exhibit. When compared to other learners who may have difficulties developing EQ that may impair their potential to build emotional intelligence, it is possible to conclude that learners who come from stable households do not find it difficult to make progress in developing their emotional intelligence.

5.4.2: Findings on social incompetence of grade 10 learners with insecure attachment style

Social incompetence refers to the inability to comfortably socialize, interact with others in a conversation. It refers to the intense fear of engaging in conversations and being humiliated in a social setting (Orpinus, 2010). The results from research participants revealed several social incompetence of insecurely attached learners. The results indicated that the themes on social incompetence among learners include low self-esteem, antisocial behaviours, aggressive behaviours, poor anger control, poor interpersonal skills, lack of emotional competence, external locus of control and this theme discussed the above in depth.

Theme	Number of Learners	Number of Teachers	Number of Deputy Principals
1. Low self esteem	04	-	01
2. Antisocial behavior	01	02	Nil
3. Aggressive behavior	-	01	-
4. Poor anger control	01	01	-
5. Poor interpersonal skills	01	02	-
6. Lack of emotional competence	-	-	01
7. External locus of control	-	01	01

Table 5: *Summary of themes on social incompetence of grade 10 learners with insecure attachment style*

5.4.2.1 Theme 1: *Low self-esteem*

Low self-esteem is commonly defined as a deficiency in self-assurance or a pessimistic perception of oneself. It denotes emotions of worthlessness, incompetence, or inadequacy (Fennell & Jenkins, 2005). It is crucial to note that low self-esteem is not an emotional condition nor a personality disorder, but rather a manifestation of underlying issues. The interview results from learner participants revealed that they fear rejection and being humiliated by others. Learner participant 7 and 9 revealed that they struggle to manage their feelings and they fail to adapt well around others without feeling like they have lost who they are. The interview excepts are reported below: *"I am always kind toward my schoolmates, but sometimes I keep silent to avoid being humiliated by other learners and I fear rejected by others."* (Learner participant, 7).*"I am friendly to my classmates but at the same time I tolerate them even though they say personal things about me. I tolerate their nasty words. I smile but sometimes it's hard. Fear rejection."* (Learner participant, 9).

Similarly, learner 5 and 10 also showed that they are still working on their social incompetence and were aware of their short- coming:

> *"I would describe my social skills as a chameleon because I would adapt to how a person feels but a certain time it makes me feel like I am losing all sense of who I am, but I try to manage my anger through meditation but sometimes I feel like meditation is making it worse. I just fear rejection."* (Learner participant, 5)

> *"I would say I am the type to get along with everyone, I always avoid conflict in any situation, but sometimes it is difficult to socialize with others because they just hate me for being me. I am not the kind of person to get angry at someone because I just feel like it is a waste of time and energy as it makes me anxious. But I desire to improve my attitude."* (Learner participant, 10)

In addition two deputy principals claimed that insecure learners fail to fully trust in themselves and lack confidence. They both concur that these learners are easily intimidated by others. The interview excepts can be seen below: *"Lastly, anxious children cannot appreciate and compliment others for doing well and they show high levels of low self-esteem as they are also*

easily intimidated by others" (Deputy principal participant, 2). This is what deputy principal had to say:

> *"They cannot express themselves fluently in the language of teaching and learning. They are easily intimidated by their counter parts in private and former model C schools. This affect their self-esteem. At grade 10 they are prone to succumb to peer pressure. They are likely to smoke drugs due to friends. There's self-doubt and lack of confidence. They do not have a backbone to say no, for fear of being rejected or labelled as cowards."*
>
> (Deputy principal participant, 1)

The findings from the interview excepts above indicate the underlying issues of why insecure learners struggle with low self-esteem which is represented in fear of rejection and intimidation. They fail to be confident because of shame and they are afraid of not being liked, being abandoned and not fitting in. In conclusion, the feelings of shame and rejection contribute to learners having difficulties with self-esteem and how they view themselves.

5.4.2.2 Theme 2: *Antisocial behaviours*

Antisocial behaviour refers to the actions of an individual that are very likely to cause annoyance, alarm, or distress to others. It is distinguished by transgressions of societal norms and infringements upon the rights of others, such as engaging in physical altercations, displaying uncontrollable outbursts of anger, defying authority, engaging in theft, or engaging in deceitful behaviour (Dumas, 1989). The findings from research revealed that insecure learners experience antisocial behaviours such as excessive anger issues and violence. Two teacher participants believed that anxious learners are more likely to be involved in fights and show withdrawal symptoms. The interview excepts from teacher 1 and 5 reported that and I quote, *"Anxious learners neglect taking place in social activities. And learners from struggling backgrounds are the ones who are fighting at school, performing badly and learners from money households perform better."* (Teacher participant, 1). *"Insecure will have withdrawal symptoms from interactions and do not engage with schoolwork but fights. However, I do try to support any child that struggles academically despite their backgrounds."* (Teacher participant, 5).

Furthermore, Learner 13 claimed that they can be violent to others as a result of failing to resolve issues.

> *"My social skills are a bit fine. I can make friends but I cannot build very good long-term relationships. My anger issues need some fixing as I can be violent sometimes but I am getting help to fix my issues as an introvert I would say that it is very difficult to make friends so hopefully the few friends I have are for life. Some people say I am insecure*." (Learner participant, 13)

From the interview excerpts above, antisocial behaviours are seen in insecure learners being involved in fights and harming others. The research findings revealed that learners do struggle with antisocial behaviours which have labelled them as social incompetent.

5.4.2.3 Theme 3: *Aggressive behaviours*

Aggressive behavior, as defined by Liu, Lewis, & Evans (2013), is the visible expression of rage or the inclination to attack. It is linked to changes in various stages of development and physical conditions. Aggression is a behavior that can be displayed even without the presence of rage (Roberton, Daffern, & Bucks, 2015). The interview results from one teacher revealed that aggressive behaviours are evident in insecure middle adolescents and these learners are very hard on themselves and others, rude and attack others with unkind words, targeting to hurt them. The interview excerpt is reported as follows:

> *"Insecure learners are usually shy, dismissive, aggressive and when they struggle with an activity, they would make noise, or be rude rather than asking for help. Learners who do not have faith in themselves tend to look down upon themselves and rejoice when confident people show weakness. And sometimes attack them with words. These are learners who are sometimes hard on themselves others as well. It is almost a work in progress as some learners are still shy to speak up and others do not want to work with others. Learners who are dismissive and anxious are usually rude, aggressive, violent and unkind."* (Teacher participant, 6)

According to the conclusions that were derived from the excerpt from the interview that was shown earlier, certain teenagers who exhibit violent behaviours demonstrate a battle with their surroundings and project aggressiveness towards other people. Additionally, it is obvious that anger is frequently accompanied with aggressive action tendencies, such as the want to yell, the desire to hit someone, and the desire to damage someone. In conclusion, violent behaviour is a sign of a multitude of underlying issues, and it also indicates that the individual lacks confidence in themselves because of it. Therefore, it is possible to draw the conclusion that one of the factors that contributes to a learner's lack of social competence is its tendency to engage in aggressive behaviours, which are occasionally acquired from the learner's home environment.

5.4.2.4 Theme 4: *Poor anger control*

Anger is a complex emotion that can range from little irritation to severe fury and rage (Daffern & Bucks, 2015). Poor anger regulation refers to the inability to restrain or conceal anger and channel it into more productive actions. The interview results on poor anger control revealed that some learners are affected by poor anger management that results to them being violent and dangerous towards others. Learner participant 11 claimed that they cannot control their anger and it emerges from somewhere, *"When it comes to socializing with other children, I tend to be shy and be quite around people that I don't know or get along with. I don't know why this happens but it has become normal to me. Yes, I have anger issues but I can't control it because I snap from somewhere. I just do things that are dangerous and I can also put some people around me in danger. Sometimes when I feel like I'm about to snap I just keep quiet and walk away from the things that makes me mad or cause me to be anxious, but it is hard."* (Learner participant, 11). Teacher participant 4 argued that disorganised learners show lots of anger in the classroom and this is translated into fights and disrespect. The interview excerpt can be seen below:

> *"Disorganized learners in my class refuse to answer some questions during a lesson and show anger to other learners and fight a lot. Social incompetent learners have low social skills and are mostly involved in fights with other learners and they don't do their work and assignments. Learners who come from broken families, show low social skills, self-awareness they can't communicate well in a group. They show disrespect for others."* (Teacher participant, 4)

As a result of the data shown above, it is clear that adolescents are required to acquire the ability to manage their anger from their parents because it is expected of them that they would demonstrate good social skills at school. Those learners who have difficulty controlling their anger have inferior social skills, which has a negative impact on their social development. It is also clear that learners who have difficulty controlling their anger are unable to get along with others, which makes it difficult for them to respect other people and to become involved in conflicts.

5.4.2.5 Theme 5: *Poor interpersonal skills*

Interpersonal skills, as previously stated, encompass crucial behaviors and strategies utilized in interacting and connecting with others, mostly on an individual level (Barakat, 2006). Impaired interpersonal skills refer to the incapacity to successfully communicate and interact with others. The research findings from the interviews revealed that disorganised learners possess poor interpersonal skills. They fail to communicate to others and build friendships. Learner participant 15, claimed that they generally do not talk to other people as they find it hard to communicate effectively. And teacher participant 2 and 4 claimed that learners with poor interpersonal skills tend to not participate in group activities. The interview excerpts are reported below:

> *"My social skills such as speaking to others are not good at all it is not easy for me to make friends. I sometimes try to manage my anger, I try with all means to manage my cool and with socializing with people but not too much because it is hard for me to talk to people."* (Learner participant, 15)

> *"An anxious and disorganized learner hardly participates in group activities in class, and mostly isolates themselves. A social incompetent learner tends to have difficulties with being social and getting along with other learners, has problems adapting to situations and communicating."* (Teacher participant, 2)

> *"Insecure anxious learners are reserved and do not participate in anything happening in the classroom and also you can differentiate using their results. Results kill their*

moral because already they are insecure so when things do not go according to plan, anxious learners would not be able to function in a group, they are more reserved when you place them in the group." (Teacher participant, 4)

It is clear from the three interview snippets that were presented above that learners who are insecure have not yet have established abilities in the area of excellent interpersonal communication. In most cases, this is observed when people are grouped together for a task. The inability to speak, communicate, or form friendships with other people is the first problem that has been discovered, and it has a direct impact on one's ability to interact with other people. It is possible to draw the conclusion that a lack of interpersonal skills is a contributing factor to social incompetence. These learners have been socially excluded from speaking with others or participating in group activities, and they have isolated themselves.

5.4.2.6 Theme 6: *Lack of emotional competence*

Emotional incompetence refers to the inability of an individual to accurately identify emotions, as well as the challenges they face in understanding and acknowledging their own feelings and the emotions of others (Orpinus, 2010). Based on the outcomes of the interviews, it was discovered that learners who are insecure lack emotional competence. One of the participants, who was a deputy principal, stated that learners are unable to effectively manage their feelings since they do not have the opportunity to practice this skill at home. *"Insecure learners lack respect since respect is never shown to them from home. Some cannot express the feelings of love and do not know how to deal with their emotions as this is none existence at home."* (Deputy principal participant, 2).

The issue that the majority of learners who are insecure confront is brought to light in the excerpt from the interview that was just shown. The inability of children to communicate and interpret their feelings is a consequence of their lack of emotional competence. Despite the fact that they are in love, they have a negative reaction because they have not learned to comprehend what they are experiencing. It is possible to draw the conclusion that youngsters who are lacking in emotional competence would also be unable to comprehend the feelings of other people, which would lead to social incompetence as well.

5.4.2.7 Theme 7: *External locus of control*

The term "locus of control" pertains to an individual's perception of the fundamental causes behind the events that transpire in their life. Simultaneously, it assumes a significant role in shaping one's personality. An individual can possess a negative external locus of control, meaning they see that their behavior is determined by other influences and is not impacted by their own decisions and efforts (Spokas & Heimberg, 2009). The results provided a more in-depth analysis of the process of peer influence in the socialization and personal development of adolescents. It was stated by a deputy principal participant that learners in the tenth grade do not make their own decisions or make efforts to develop themselves; rather, they largely rely on their friends, which hurts their grades. Following is a report of the excerpt from the interview:

> *"They listen more to their friends and peers more that they'd listen to their parents. They value the friends' opinions more than that of teachers and parents. There is mostly high failure rate in grade 10 than in other grades because of lack of social competencies. They are unable to adapt to the FET phase as they just came out of the senior phase. They are in the process of discovering who they are. They are expected to choose subjects which will affect their entire lives at a stage where they are unsure of themselves."* (Deputy principal participant, 1)

In addition teacher participant 4, also believed that insecure learners fail to deal with peer pressure and blame others for their circumstance. The interview excerpts is reported below:

> *"Socially I wouldn't say insecure learners are competent because if they don't yet know how to deal with peer pressure and blame others for their failure, they are not yet socially competent because a socially competent learner would know where to draw the line. They are in competition with their friends and they are not mindful that they are from different backgrounds."* (Teacher participant, 4)

According to the interview excerpts presented above, adolescents are subjected to the pressure of conforming their thoughts and actions to specific guidelines that have been prescribed by their peers. Furthermore, they are afflicted with the negative characteristics of freely giving

control to others in order to receive assurance, acceptance, and validity, which in turn causes them to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.

5.5: Findings on how schools could be a secure base for learners from insecure attachments

The study finally examined how schools could play a recognisable role in building a secure base for learners with insecure attachment styles. From this knowledge, it was important to find solutions and recommendations that could assist to make schools a secure base for insecurely attached learners. The research findings of learners, teachers and deputy principals suggested that there is need for psycho-social support to provide secure base for learners from insecure attachments.

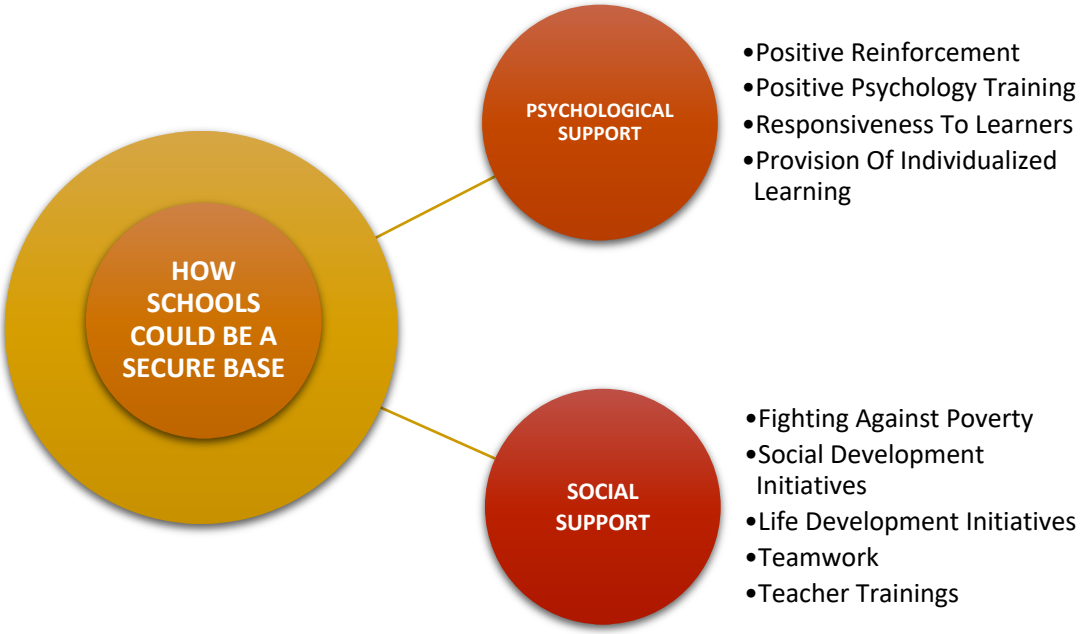


Figure 3: *Summary of themes on how schools could be a secure base for learners*

5.5.1: Findings on provision of psychological support for secure base for learners from insecure attachments

Kennedy (2018) and Tankersley (2022) both elucidate new and positive experiences can change a poor attachment style of a child. The results of the study indicated that there is need for schools to provide psychological support to make them secure bases for learners from insecure parent-child attachments. The themes reported on psychological support include, positive

reinforcement, positive psychology training, responsiveness to learners and provision of individualized learning. *The themes are presented and discussed as follows:*

Theme	Number of Learners	Number of Teachers	Number of Deputy Principals
1. Positive reinforcement	-	-	01
2. Positive psychology training	-	-	02
3. Responsiveness To learners	-	01	02
4. Provision to individualized learning	-	01	01

Table 6: *Summary of themes on psychological support for secure base for learners from insecure attachments*

5.5.1.1: Theme 1: *Positive reinforcement*

Reinforcement is the process of enhancing a stimulus that follows a behaviour, resulting in an increased frequency of that behaviour (Rumfola, 2017). The interview results from the participants revealed that the best learning environment outcome is to encourage learners through positive reinforcement such as praise instead of always pointing out what they do wrong. Teacher participant, 4 claimed that praise (positive reinforcement) is something that is teachers need to bring back in the classroom to establish a secure base for negative learners. The interview excerpt is reported as follows:

> *"I think in the morale of learners praise good behaviour and the little things that they do correctly don't always focus on the negative and I think most of the teachers we struggle with that we are focused on meeting deadlines that we forget to actually praise the little things that our learners are able to achieve they shouldn't be fearful of that".*

Furthermore, one deputy principal participant claimed that using positive reinforcement could change the narrative of learners as they are more used to punishment. The interview excerpt can be seen below:

> *"... Emphasize positive enforcements through action and speech; show more empathy to learners to make them feel welcome in your presence which could be the opposite of their lived experiences. Positive outcomes have proven to be drawn from previously negatively learners who were then pulled closer by a teacher showing more care and warmth to the learner."* (Deputy principal participant, 3).

As the data presented above demonstrated, positive reinforcement has the potential to assist learners in overcoming undesirable behaviours and to motivate them to learn from the experiences of others. In addition, the data demonstrated that learners in the classroom benefit from positive reinforcement since it aids them in focusing not on inappropriate behaviour but rather on the appropriate behaviour that is required of them. Consequently, it is possible to draw the conclusion that schools have a responsibility to foster a culture of positive reinforcement inside the classes it serves.

5.5.1.2: Theme 2: *Positive psychology training*

Positive psychology training is a method that prioritizes the cultivation of an individual's strengths and abilities rather than focusing on resolving their issues. Clonan, Chafouleas, and McDougal (2004) argue that it diverts attention from areas of deficiency and instead concentrates on improving positive qualities, such as self-assurance, in individuals. A good sense of self-worth and confidence should be fostered in learners by schools, according to the findings of the interviews conducted with two deputy principals participant. The individuals who took part in the study asserted that a training in positive psychology can provide learners with assistance during challenging times of their development and inspire them to trust in themselves. One deputy principal believed that positive psychology can benefit learners greatly, *"Building their self-esteem and guiding them through the difficult stages of development. Provide curriculum that supports learners where there's lack of parental guidance*." (Deputy principal participant, 3).

Following is a report of the extract from the interview from deputy principal 2 who also believed that positive psychology training can yield positive results:

> *"Make school a place of refuge, where they feel safe to talk. Instil self-esteem and feeling of self-worth. To believe in themselves more. The ability to maximise their potential by engaging them on their day to day life experiences. Welcoming and trusting their abilities and always willing to offer support and a helping hands."* (Deputy principal participant, 2)

As a result of the discussion that have taken place so far, it is possible to draw the conclusion that schools have the ability to re-establish confidence and competence provided they are intentional and conscious of the role that they play. Based on the findings, it was determined that there is a requirement for parental direction and assistance in order to instil the process of psychological training.

5.5.1.3: Theme 3: *Responsiveness to learners*

Responsiveness refers to the caregiver's complete awareness of their availability and dependability, which fosters a feeling of safety and confidence, independent behavior, competence, language skills, and intellectual accomplishments in a kid (Richman, Miller, & LeVine, 1992). The interview results from the participants revealed that teachers could assist insecure learners by creating a secure base through interaction. Participants claimed that responsiveness can accelerate the learners growth. Teacher participant 6 believed that teachers can show responsiveness by being proactive, inviting, and interactive in the classroom and leave no learner un-attendant. The interview excerpt can be seen below:

> *"Every teacher must be proactively involved in the life of learners and invite those who might be struggling by showing care and interest in their development. Lastly teachers must be interactive with all learners without discrimination or favouritism. I believe these three mechanisms could be helpful and useful to establish a secure base for learners."*

Additionally two stakeholders believed that consistent responsiveness can motivate learners and result in sense of security in the classroom and a secure base for all learners. Interview excerpts are reported below:

"Educators can use many mechanisms such as being consistent, being responsive and offer learners motivation. Have close and well-adjusted relationships with your learners which will provide a sense of security in classrooms resulting in making a classroom a more secure base for learners from insecure attachment backgrounds." (Teacher participant , 2)

"When we respond well to learners this is a motivation leads to value of education which will be an escape from poverty. Train educators to identify such learners and further assist them. It is also crucial to involve social services." (Deputy principal participant, 2)

The data from the interview excepts that were presented earlier indicate the crucial impact that responsiveness plays and how it might expedite growth in learners. It is possible to draw the conclusion that educational institutions should make a conscious effort to be accessible in order to foster a sense of trust in learners and to respond appropriately.

5.5.1.4: Theme 4: *Provision of individualized learning*

Personalized learning promotes learners' introspection regarding their acquisition of knowledge and the methods they employ to do so. The approach promotes collaboration by recognizing the classroom as a community where all individuals contribute to the shared learning goals (Scheurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014). The interview results from the participants revealed that teachers need to make provisions for individualized or learner centred classrooms where learning is also a strategy to boost the confidence of learners. The interview excerpt of teacher participant, 1 is reported as follows: *"... And also allowing learner-centered strategy will involve in learners building up their confidence."* Two other participants claimed that teachers have a role and a responsibility to be purposeful in making learners conscious of their potential and also allow them to make mistakes. The interview excerpts can be seen below:

"As teachers we have a responsibility to make sure that every child feels comfortable in the classroom in as much as we are too strict but sometimes we need to balance things and create an environment where learners are not afraid to make mistakes and they should know that they are there to learn so you allow them room to make mistakes to be able to improve." (Teacher participant, 5)

> *"It would help if we were purposeful in our teaching, making the learners conscious of their potential and encouraging them to be more assertive and inventive in learning. Even with the daily structured learning programmes we could do well to offer our learners sufficient challenging encounters to increase exposure to resilience and independence through our varied lesson presentations."* (Deputy principal participant, 3)

Individualized learning would play a big role in addressing the learning and psychological needs of learners, and it would also leave them with high competence abilities such as resilience and independence, according to the results of the interviews with the participants. It is possible to draw the conclusion that stakeholders have faith in the efficacy of establishing a classroom environment in which the requirements of the learners are met.

5.5.2: FINDINGS ON PROVISION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT FOR SECURE BASE FOR LEARNERS FROM INSECURE ATTACHMENTS

The findings of the study indicated that there is need for schools to provide social support to make them secure bases for learners from insecure parent-child attachments. The themes reported on social support include fighting against poverty, social development initiatives, life development initiatives, teamwork and teacher trainings could be most suited for their schools to overcome their negative experiences with insecurities and pave way to secure attachment. The themes are presented and discussed as follows:

Theme	Number of Learners	Number of Teachers	Number of Deputy Principals
1. Fighting against poverty	01	-	01
Social development initiatives	05	02	03
2. Life development initiatives	02	-	03
3. Teamwork	-	02	-

4. Teacher trainings	-	-	02

Table 7: Summary of social support for secure base for learners from insecure attachments

5.5.2.1: Theme 1: *Fighting against poverty*

Poverty reduction refers to a comprehensive combination of economic and humanitarian actions aimed at permanently elevating individuals out of poverty (Rea & Zinskie, 2017). The interview results from the participants revealed that initiatives to fight against poverty play a huge role of providing learners with basic needs. Learner participant 12 claimed that feeding schemes as one of the initiative against poverty plays a huge role in school as they are never without food. The interview excerpt is reported: *"Feeding scheme plays a big role in our school. There is always food and apples for everyone. We also get to save pocket money or have no worry to go to school in days we don't have pocket money."* Moreover, one deputy principal reported that township schools experience a high level of poverty where learners are from single parent households where there is a lack of basic needs. The interview excerpt is reported below: *"Is feeding scheme a programme ? This is very helpful for all learners to eat and just bond*." (Learner participant, 11).

Moreover, one deputy principal participant revealed that learners come from poor homes and there are programmes in line that aim to assist learners:

> *"The school experiences a large number of single parenthood where some learners are orphans and are raised by grandmothers, which gives birth to low parental involvement. The government has a help a girl project where girl learners receive toiletries every quarter and a large number of learners depend on that."*
>
> (Deputy principal participant, 3)

Taking into consideration the findings presented above, it is clear that the multifaceted requirements of learners living in poverty must be handled in a comprehensive and equitable manner in order to alleviate the complex barrier of learners being affected both at home and at school. According to the statistics, the most prevalent programs that are implemented in schools to combat poverty are those that have the distribution of food and sanitary towels.

5.5.2.2: Theme 2: *Social development initiatives*

Social development refers to the act of allocating resources towards the improvement and advancement of individuals within a society. Social development projects aim to enhance the overall welfare of individuals in society, enabling them to achieve their maximum capabilities. The statement contends that individuals residing in poverty will perpetually be impoverished (Drolet, 2014). The interview results from the 5 learner participants revealed excursions, sports and culture as social development initiatives that could help them enjoy school and also reach their full potential. What was common about the findings was that learners desire for these activities to be established in their schools as they are experiencing none. Learner 6 reported that *"I think my school should start a dance club like schools in Johannesburg. We want to express ourselves through music and dance and have a lots of events."* (Learner participant, 6). Two learners revealed that they participate in debate and need more support *"The debate competitions with other schools help us challenge other schools and we have been winning all tournaments and more support can be given." (Learner participant, 7). "Debate has to be the best thing that has happened to me and my friends. I now enjoy talking about any issue and sometimes I engage my family." (Learner participant, 4).* Another learner commented on athletics *"Athletics are fun and help us represent the school in all district. I am an athlete since grade 4 and I have been receiving more help from my teachers and the trips we have had but we only train in the first term." (Learner participant, 3).*

One more interview excerpt from learner 5 also revealed that sporting activities are no more:

> *"The only sport I enjoyed was netball however it was cancelled because of, I don't know. We just don't practice anymore. I wish this high school was like primary school. We used to play a lot every Thursday. Now, I do not do anything at school. There is no sport."* (Learner participant, 5)

In addition, both teachers and deputy principal were in agreement about establishing sports, culture and excursion opportunities for learners for them to experience a wholistic development. One deputy principal participant claimed that schools ought to invest more time in ensuring learners a better schooling experience, *"The deliberate attempt at sporting potential would also be spontaneous in most teachers if we could put in more effort in a cross field of other co-*

curricular activities. It helps if learners know they can do more than just academic learning at school and in later life" (Deputy principal participant, 2). Moreover, two teachers also commented about the necessity of social development initiatives and this is what they had to say *"Debate opportunities, sports, girl and boy clubs, school camps and different intervention programmes can assist learners."* (Teacher participant, 6). *"The school should have social activities designed to build the self-development of learners."* (Teacher participant, 4).

More interview excerpt from deputy principal 3 is reported below:

> *"We must yet increasingly expose our learners to the outside world of sports, commerce, industry and the trades which equally in demand in life beyond school. The school could organise for our learners to visit areas of interest to their career choices to have a first-hand experience of what happens in the life of a lawyer for example."*
>
> (Deputy principal participant, 3)

From above, an indication of the necessity of establishing social development initiatives in schools was provided by excerpts from interviews, which were based on the findings. In addition, the findings suggested that ensuring that learners get off to a strong start in their educational journey is a significant factor in determining the level of success they would have in the future. In conclusion, it is possible to draw the conclusion that sports have been seen as a platform that is conducive to the development of life skills and character, which can be beneficial to the personal growth of individuals and influence the way they view their educational experience.

5.5.2.3: Theme 3: *Life development initiatives*

A life development program outlines the process of enhancing an individual's knowledge, performance, abilities, and effectiveness (Koh and Camiré, 2015). The interview results from the participants revealed that life development programmes are necessary for equipping learners with life skills beyond schooling. One teacher referred to counselling as a life development initiative thar could be beneficial to the school *"Endeavours make the school a safety sanctuary for all and effective school based support teams to guide, counsel and assist teachers to effectively provide support to all learners experiencing learner barriers." (Deputy principal participant 2).*

Two deputy principal participants claimed that exposure to future work environments, real life experiences could benefit all learners. The interview excerpts are reported below:

> *"Life orientation curriculum should include programmes that relates to real life development programmes. Each subject should incorporate developmental content which is aimed at building the self-esteem and self-awareness programmes. Psychometric tests which will assist learners in learning about their interests and personalities. Expose learners to the work environment etc."* (Deputy principal participant, 1)

> *"Have real life experiences shared with learners. Not simply following the prescribed curriculum but taking learners through life lessons about, relationships, money, fashion, social media etc. More awareness on factors such as independence, decision making, how to avoid peer pressure."* (Deputy principal participant, 3)

Moreover, 3 learner participants highlighted their experiences with school counselling and how they are being equipped with life lessons. Learner participant 11 reported that the free counselling they receive is helpful and life changing to them: *"During free counselling here at school, we speak about self-esteem and future goals, and that helps me see that I will have a big house and cars in the future"* (Learner participant, 11). Additional interview excerpt of learner participants 9 and 10 can be seen below: *"My LO teacher organises counselling for learners who have challenges at home and I think that is really good."* (Learner participant, 9). *"The quarterly meetings with social works are really helping me a lot. I wish they were every month."* (Learner participant, 10).

Life-Orientation as a learning area could be utilized intentionally as a subject to drive change and as a program for life development, according to the findings that were presented before. In addition, the excerpts from the interviews with the kids brought to light the significance of school counselling with trained social workers in terms of assisting learners with their personal development and growth.

5.5.2.4: Theme 4: *Teamwork*

Teamwork is the collaborative effort of a group of individuals who depend on each other to achieve a shared objective. Effective teamwork is dependent on the capacity of learners to engage in the process of negotiating authority within small peer groups (Thomas, 2002). The interview excerpts from two teacher participants revealed the importance of teamwork in class as an extension of learners also learning from one another and growing in their social competence. Teachers believed that working with others in a team could encourage learners to feel significant in the classroom. The interview excerpts can be seen below:

> *"Teamwork allows students to teach each other, learn and emphasize behavior management. It encourages learning from experience. I believe such of group works and team work are vital and necessary to assure and encourage all grade 10 learners to be secure and feel significant in the classroom."* (Teacher participant, 2)

> *"But most importantly, group assignments and involvement. Involvement, invitation and interaction. I call them the triple I's and I think interacting and being involved in groups play an important role in shaping learners because they get to learn from each other."* (Teacher participant, 6)

As a conclusion, this subject highlighted the significance of complete involvement and interaction as essential components of successful teamwork, and it emphasized the necessity of collaboration between teachers and pupils to guarantee that teamwork is effectively accomplished. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the process of working in teams should be appealing and that learners who are insecure should be encouraged to participate and offered help to complete tasks.

5.5.2.5 Theme 5: *Teacher Trainings*

Harris and Sass (2011) define "teacher training" as the process of strengthening the capacities of both pre-service and in-service teachers to increase learner achievement through professional support and the provision of resources. The findings of the interviews conducted with deputy principals revealed that schools do not receive any professional help or development trainings, with the exception of the subject areas that they are responsible for teaching, Deputy principal participant, 3 mentioned that their school is not developed in psychology *"We do not have any*

trainings at all except for subject related content knowledge, psychology is something that is not prioritised". Similarly deputy principal participant 1, also shared the same sentiments. *"There are no training programmes designed to train teachers on secure attachment. This is actually a foreign concept to many teachers in the township schools."*

Moreover, one more deputy principal also confirmed the lack of teacher development trainings, the interview excerpt is reported below:

> *"The school does not comprehensively independently have such programmes but those that are complemented by the GDE. We have committees such as the school based support team to help support secure attachments. Furthermore, the school has programmes such as the adopt-a-learner one in which learners with specific needs are addressed by the adoptee teacher. However, we have not begun implementing this. It is still a challenge."* (Deputy principal participant, 2)

According to the findings that were derived from the snippets of the interviews that were presented earlier, there is a knowledge gap in teacher trainings. This means that teachers and various stakeholders in schools receive less training on the knowledge of learners and more training on content subjects. It has been argued in the literature that learning about learners places a significant emphasis on expertise in the diagnosis of human learning, motivation, and child development (Nezhad & Vahedi, 2011).

5.6: SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter reported the outcomes of the research and addressed the main research topics. The interview excerpts displayed the outcomes regarding various forms of parent-child attachments, the factors that influence attachment patterns, social competence, and the potential for schools to serve as secure bases. These excerpts were subsequently analysed and evaluated. In the next chapter, the study's findings, conclusions, and suggestions are presented in summary form. The next chapter also presents a model that has been generated on the basis of the findings that are presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMEMDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a synopsis of the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations. Subsequent to an exposition of this study, the chapter proceeds with a synopsis of the research outcomes, a discourse on said outcomes in relation to the relevant literature and concluding remarks. In addition, the chapter presents policy recommendations for institutions and education, and practice suggestions. In the chapter's conclusion, the study's limitations are examined, suggestions for further research are provided, and concluding remarks are made.

6.2: OVERVIEW OF THE PhD THESIS

This study employed the interpretivism paradigm to investigate attachment and social competence among grade 10 pupils in Sedibeng West township schools, in Gauteng, South Africa. The first chapter of the study presents the introduction of the study including background of the study, research problem, rationale, aims, objectives, and research questions, and finally, the operational definition of terms. The second chapter presents the literature review, in which previous studies have been identified and research gaps have been discussed as well. In chapter three, the study presents the theoretical frameworks that served as the foundation for the research. The fourth chapter of the study focused on the methodology and research design of the study. The research's qualitative findings and interpretation are presented in the fifth chapter, in which a summary of themes was provided. Finally, chapter six presents the summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

Main Research Question

The main research question was stated as follows:

Which attachments styles are possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools, in South Africa? What factors contributing to secure and insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners?

Sub-Research Questions

The research questions of the study were stated as follows:

1. Which forms of attachments styles are possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools?
2. What are the factors contributing to insecure and secure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng wet township schools?
3. What are the social competences of grade 10 learners from insecure and secure parent-child attachments?
4. How can could schools be secure bases for learners in insecure attachments?
5. Which framework/s could assist teachers to make schools a secure base for learners from insecure attachment backgrounds?

The next section presents the summary of the study findings.

6.3 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

6.3.1 Forms of attachments styles possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools

This study examined the forms of attachments styles possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools. The findings showed that learners were from both secure and insure attachment styles in their homes. The findings indicated that eleven learners came from secure attachment families. The findings revealed secure learners to be self-assured, respectful, confident, engaged in class, and proficient in official and informal evaluations. On the other hand, the findings indicated that some learners were from insecure attachment families. For example, the findings indicated that four learners were from avoidant attachment households, and they were characterized by family dysfunction, inconsistency, hostility, lack of close relatives' support, and limited communication. The findings also showed that avoidant-dismissive learners crave for and depend on their caregiver while intentionally distancing themselves from them. In addition, the findings also showed a number of avoidant-dismissive insecure learners participated in the study and they desired touch but did not find it comforting. Moreover, such learners were reported to be passive, whiny, fussy, helpless, or immature and resist the attachment figure. The findings reported home psychological and physical abuse, a strong need to be emotionally stable, a sensitive nervous system, and trauma to the main

contributors.

The findings also showed that some learners were from anxious insecure attachment families, and that prohibited them from resting. The findings also showed that anxious attachment style examines children's traumatic pasts and present experiences, unlike other attachment styles. Moreover, learners have little control over these traumatic occurrences, which harm them. The research also showed that secure functioning models can change insecure attachment habits. Finally, the results showed that one learner had a disordered attachment style. The results show that caregivers' insensitivity and absence negatively affect learners' behaviour and social and emotional development. Findings revealed that disorganized learners may act violently, mischievously, and stubbornly at home because they feel unsupported and this is likely due to rage and disorientation from caregiver neglect.

6.3.2 Factors contributing to insecure and secure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng wet township schools

6.3.2.1: Factors contributing to secure parent-child attachment patterns among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools

The findings of the study indicated that five factors contributed to secure parent-child attachment patterns including home emotional availability, parental support and motivation, parental provision and supervision, and family protection. The findings suggest emotional availability at home is crucial and that learners felt close to their families and could talk about anything. The findings showed that learners who live with siblings, parents, and extended family members receive emotional affection, support, and guidance on physical, behavioral, and emotional development. This gave them secure attachment, which shaped their life and mental health.

The findings showed that parental support for children may affect adolescents' success motivation. Parents' encouragement and support enhanced the child's development and confidence to explore. It was also shown that children who are supported, loved, and respected are more secure and optimistic. According to findings, many communities in Sedibeng west district value parental provision of basic requirements, which ensures learners' physical well-being. In addition, the findings showed that supplying basic necessities contributes to safe

bonding and meets children's physical needs, which are crucial to their health and development. From findings family protection is important, and when families provide safety and a safe haven, children can freely explore. Secure learners who lived with both parents and/or extended families had higher protection, resources, supervision, caregiver presence, and communication.

6.3.2.2: Factors that contribute to insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners

The findings of the study also indicated that eight factors contributed to insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in secondary schools including, single parenting and fatherlessness, dysfunctional families and conflict, poverty, lack of parental support and involvement, non-supportive cultural practices, lack of parental love and identity crisis, and lack of role models. Thus, the findings indicated that single mothers were less happy with emotional supports and reported greater stress levels, which affected their children's outcomes and made them more vulnerable. Moreover, the findings reported that lack of father figures was a difficulty for learners and this contributed to insecure attachment patterns in families. Thus, the death and absence of fathers from the above caused learners to resent their home surroundings and question themselves and their attachment insecurity increased.

Secondly, poor families were more likely to experience various stressors that led to insecure parent-child ties and harsher parenting. Thus, poverty can affect parents' ability to meet children's needs and may involve job loss or lack of funds. According to the research findings, poverty affected how learners saw their futures, negatively affected their development, and produced melancholy and anxiety. The findings also showed that some township school parents lacked child support knowledge and due to poor parenting abilities and little parental care, parents are uninterested in their children's development. There is also evidence from findings showed that families without educational backgrounds fail to help their children academically.

From findings, poor self-image and negative insecure attachment styles are linked to lack of parental affection. Love at home helps learners avoid identity crises and have a healthy self-image. Findings showed that good role models from home inspired youngsters to strive for greatness and get them enthused about the future. Again, home-based problems including caregiver neglect caused identity crises in learners. Learners who struggled with self-image developed insecurities that led to identity crisis.

6.3.3 Social competences of grade 10 learners from insecure and secure parent-child attachments

6.3.3.1: Social competences of grade 10 learners with secure attachment styles

The findings of the study reported that there were social competence skills that were exhibited by learners from secure attachment patterns. The findings revealed that social competences from secure attachment families encompassed effective anger management, proficient social abilities, effective communication, interpersonal skills, elevated self-esteem, positive self-efficacy, exceptional academic success, and heightened emotional intelligence. The findings indicate that individuals who possess a stable attachment type demonstrate effective anger management skills and are less prone to negative reactions when confronted with rage. Adolescents who come from homes with secure attachment have acquired the skill of effectively managing and controlling their anger. From findings secure learners possess strong social skills, as evidenced by their ability to effectively communicate and interact with people in a polite manner. The results also indicated that these learners do not possess a short temper or have a tendency to become readily agitated.

The findings indicated that individuals who possess a strong sense of security are capable of cultivating and sustaining positive connections by actively honing their communication abilities. Moreover, it can be affirmed that proficient communication abilities aid learners in establishing positive relationships and fostering social development during their adolescent years. The findings indicate that certain teenagers are acquiring interpersonal skills through interactions with their peers at school. The findings indicate that children with elevated self-esteem exhibit confidence in themselves, leading to increased productivity in their academic pursuits. They are also more inclined to seek assistance from teachers, actively participate in classroom activities, and gain insights into areas for improvement in their learning and overall development.

The findings suggested that learners who originate from stable households exhibit self-efficacy and are motivated to have faith in their abilities to excel academically. The self-assurance exhibited by these learners enables them to actively participate in class, inquire about concepts, and complete examinations with the conviction that they will excel. The results indicated that secure learners, due to their confidence in doing any given task, are more likely to excel in their academic performance. Their aptitude for inquiring about areas of difficulty enables them to

excel academically, as they are also proficient in verbal expression. The results suggested that learners who feel comfortable are enhancing their emotional intelligence by displaying a positive attitude and demonstrating their capacity to assess events and respond effectively. These behavioural impacts indicate that learners possess the capacity to manage and govern their emotions.

6.3.3.2: Social incompetence of grade 10 learners from insecure attachment styles

The findings uncovered many manifestations of social incompetence among learners with insecure attachments. The findings revealed that the prevalent social incompetence among learners encompassed low self-esteem, antisocial behaviours, aggressive behaviours, deficient anger regulation, inadequate interpersonal skills, insufficient emotional competence, and an external locus of control. The findings above revealed the root causes of low self-esteem among insecure learners, namely the fear of rejection and intimidation. Their lack of confidence stems from feelings of guilt and a fear of not being accepted, being rejected, and not fitting in. Feelings of humiliation and rejection might hinder learners' self-esteem and self-perception. Based on the results, it is evident that insecure learners exhibit antisocial behaviours, such as engaging in physical altercations and causing injury to others. The research findings indicate that learners face difficulties with antisocial behaviours, which have led to them being labelled as socially incompetent.

The findings revealed that specific teenagers who exhibit violent behaviours are grappling with their situations and direct their aggression towards others. Furthermore, it is apparent that anger frequently coincides with violent behavioural inclinations, such as a proclivity to shout, a desire to physically strike someone, and a wish to cause harm. Finally, violent behaviour serves as a manifestation of various underlying issues and is also indicative of a lack of self-assurance. Research findings indicates that teenagers must acquire anger control skills at home in order to demonstrate appropriate social behaviour at school. Individuals who struggle with managing their anger exhibit limited social skills that have a detrimental impact on their social growth.
Insecure learners have been seen to lack proficiency in interpersonal skills. This phenomenon is predominantly observed when they are organized together for a specific objective. The primary issue found is the lack of ability to effectively communicate with others or establish friendships, hence impacting interpersonal skills.

The findings emphasized the difficulty that the majority of vulnerable learners encounter. Children who lack emotional competence are restricted in their ability to both express and understand their feelings. They respond unfavourably to love due to their lack of comprehension of their emotions. Children who lack emotional competence would also struggle to comprehend the emotions of others, leading to social incompetence. Lastly, the findings indicate that adolescents face pressure to conform to peer-defined norms and exhibit negative traits of surrendering control to others in order to seek validation and acceptance.

6.3.4 HOW SCHOOLS CAN BE SECURE BASES FOR LEARNERS IN INSECURE ATTACHMENTS

The study explored how schools can be secure bases for learners in insecure attachments. The findings are discussed as follows:

6.3.4.1: Provision of psychological support for secure base for learners from insecure attachments

The findings of the study indicated that there is a requirement for psychosocial support in order to offer learners who come from insecure attachments with a steady foundation. There are several components that make up psychological support, including positive reinforcement, training in positive psychology, attentiveness to learners, and the provision of tailored learning. Second, the social support that includes extra academic support, fighting against poverty, social development initiatives, life development initiatives, teamwork, and teacher trainings could be the most suitable for their schools in order to help them overcome the negative experiences they have had with insecurities and pave the way for secure attachment.

According to the findings, learners would benefit from receiving positive reinforcement because it can assist them in eliminating undesirable behaviours and encourage them to learn from others. In addition, the data demonstrated that learners in the classroom benefit from positive reinforcement since it aids them in focusing not on inappropriate behaviour but rather on the appropriate behaviour that is required of them. Based on the data, it was determined that responsiveness plays a vital role and that it can speed up the growth of learners. Individualized learning would play a big role in addressing the learning and psychological needs of learners, and it would also leave them with high competence abilities such as resilience and independence, according to the results of the interviews with the participants.

Based on the findings, it was determined that there is a requirement for parental direction and assistance in order to instil the process of psychological training. Taking into consideration the facts presented above, it is clear that the numerous requirements of children living in poverty must be addressed in a comprehensive and equitable manner in order to alleviate the complicated obstacle of pupils being affected both at home and at school. According to the statistics, the most prevalent programs that are implemented in schools to combat poverty are those that have the distribution of food and sanitary towels.

6.3.4.2: Provision of social support for secure base for learners from insecure attachments

The findings of the study also indicated that there is a requirement for new social development programs to be implemented in schools. In addition, the findings suggested that ensuring that learners get off to a strong start in their educational journey is a significant factor in determining the level of success they would have in the future. Life-Orientation as a learning area could be utilized intentionally as a subject to drive change and as a program for life development, according to the findings that were presented before. In addition, the findings highlighted the significance of employing trained social workers to provide counselling services in schools in order to assist children with their personal development and growth. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the process of working in teams should be appealing, and that learners who are insecure should be encouraged to participate and offered help in order to complete tasks.

According to the findings, there is a knowledge gap in teacher trainings, which means that teachers and various stakeholders in schools receive less training on the knowledge of learners and more training on topic areas. The findings demonstrated that gaining knowledge about learners places a significant emphasis on developing expertise in the areas of human learning, motivation, and child development studies.

6.4 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section presents discussion of findings for the study.

6.4.1 Forms of attachments styles possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng West township schools

The study explored the forms of attachments styles possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools. The study findings demonstrated four forms of attachment

styles possessed among learners in three different schools, namely, secure, avoidant dismissive, anxious and disorganized attachment styles. The study findings on the forms of attachments are discussed with literature as follows.

The findings of the study reported that some learners were from securely attached homes which were significantly influenced by trust, love, communication and positive self-image. In addition, the findings indicated that learners from secure attachment families showed very positive attributes from their family bonds and were good at conflict resolution. This finding agrees with Fearon and Roisman (2017) study which contends that secure attachment style is founded by trust, confidence, efficient communication, balanced independence and dependency, good self-esteem, emotional control, and resilience. Similarly, the finding concurs with Greenman (2022) which decoded that individuals with a secure attachment style frequently exhibit enhanced resilience when confronted with adversities in life and possess superior coping strategies, more optimistic perspective and are able to resolve conflict.

Moreover, the study findings showed that secure learners are confident children, who respect others and show high levels of participation in the classroom and good understanding of formal and informal assessments. In agreement, Darling-Hammond, et al., (2020) reiterated that children who come from secure homes are generally taught a robust sense of self-esteem and are confident to fully participate in their environments. Similarly, Sagone, et al., (2023) found that individuals with secure attachment tend to possess a favourable perception of themselves and exhibit robust self-confidence. Moreover, this finding agrees with Hong and Park (2012) that individuals with a secure attachment style are capable of confidently and effectively communicating their wants and emotions, while also demonstrating attentiveness and responsiveness towards the needs of others. In addition, this finding concurs with Bowlby, (1969, 1973 & 1980) theoretical assertion that a steady attachment figure must serve as a secure foundation for children to venture into their environment with confidence and knowledge that they have a reliable source of support to rely on. Furthermore, Evans (2020) reiterate that Bronfenbrenner theory asserts that if a child has a strong nurturing relationship with their parents, this would have a positive effect on the child. The implication of this finding thereof, is that parents need to be taught, provided with support and guidance on the importance of secure attachment type in order to support children and strengthen their relationships.

The findings of the study also indicated that some learners were from avoidant dismissive attachment style which is characterized by lack of support, resentment, closed communication and an unmet desire for stable relationship with caregivers created avoidant dismissive learners. This finding is in agreement with Stanojević and Nedeljković, (2020) which argued that avoidant-dismissive individuals encounter challenges in communication and conveying their own emotions and may face difficulties in establishing emotional connections with others. These individuals may seek reassurance and approval from others, and grapple with a deep-seated fear of rejection or feeling unloved (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2020). In addition, the findings agree with Bowlby's (1969) theoretical assertation which argued that avoidant-dismissive youngsters inhibit their adverse emotions when in the company of the unsupportive attachment figure, in order to avoid the possibility of being rejected or separated from them. In addition, the finding concurs with Bronfenbrenner's (2005) theoretical assertion which argued that personal and everyday environment that the child finds themselves in can either hinder or support the child's development. The implication of this finding is that schools should develop parenting programs or increase awareness in the community, which would provide parents with effective bonding techniques that may improve development and emotional security in avoidant-dismissive children and rectify their unpleasant experiences.

The study findings indicated that some learners emanated from anxious attachment style families because they came from broken homes and experienced abuse, high anxiety and trauma. The findings indicated lack emotional care, lack of confidence and disruptive behaviors among learners were end results of anxious attachment styles. This finding is in agreement with Stanojević and Nedeljković, (2020) which reported that anxious attachment pattern commonly arises as a result of inconsistent caring, characterized by a caregiver who is sporadically responsive and accessible and attachment figures of nervous children may possess a background characterized by instances of abuse, drug utilization, sadness, or experiences of loss such as death or divorce (Carlson 1998). In agreement, this finding concurs with Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) which reported that in anxious attachment style, the child's heightened sensitivity to the parent's reaction due to the inconsistency leads them to explore various behaviours in order to fulfil their needs and establish a sense of security. In agreement, this finding agrees with Bronfenbrenner's (2005) theoretical assertion that all of the environmental changes that occur over the lifetime have the power to influence development, including major life transitions, and historical events such as abuse. The implication of this finding is that

schools should put in place appropriate counselling programs to help in early identification of learners from anxious attachment patterns for best interventions.

The study findings also indicated that disorganized attachment style is significantly influenced by negative feelings of anger caused by low sensitivity and a negative behaviour of violence as a coping mechanism to deal with lack of care and responsiveness. The study findings indicated that disorganized learners do not feel seen and supported at home. In agreement to this finding, Moretti, (2004) argued that disorganized children may exhibit volatile behavior, such as initiating physical altercations and damaging objects in their vicinity and struggle to establish a bond with their caregivers because they experience significant levels of fear and anxiety. Similarly, this finding agrees with Ainsworth (1978) theoretical argument that children who were disorganized displayed contradictory behaviors, perplexity, or a lack of organization. Similarly, this attachment pattern is frequently correlated with more difficult home conditions (Mancini et al, 2020).

In addition, this finding agrees with Beeney, (2017) which asserts that caregiver of a child with fearful-avoidant attachment style may exhibit very unpredictable behavior, causing the child to oscillate between demanding anxious attention and withdrawing in an avoidant manner. In agreement, this finding agrees with Bowlby (1969) theoretical assertion that disorganized attachment style can result in unpredictable and inconsistent behavior and the ramifications of this attachment style include the development of a want for intimacy in youngsters, accompanied by a profound dread of being abandoned and rejected. Moreover, the finding concurs with Bronfenbrenner (1986) theoretical argument that there are multiple aspects of a developing child's life that interacts with and affects the child. And distant and unaffectionate parents would have a negative effect on the child. The implication of this finding is that the School Governing Bodies (SGB) should educate parents about the negative effects of this attachment style in order to rectify this in disorganized learners and assist them with the right support.

6.4.2 Factors contributing to a secure attachment style among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng wet township schools

The research findings identified multiple aspects that contribute to the establishment of secure parent-child attachment types. The elements encompass emotional accessibility within the

household, parental assistance and drive, parental provision and oversight, and family safeguarding. This finding aligns with those of Zain et al., (2023), which reported that various factors contribute to a more positive experience. These factors include emotional availability in the home, responsive caregiving, availability, positive interactions, consistency, support of exploration, sensitivity, availability of a secure base, parental support and motivation, parental provision, family protection, emotional support, cultural considerations, parental wellness, and responsive educational and home environments. According to the findings, emotional availability in the home environment is a result of learners feeling secure and comfortable at home, as well as being able to openly communicate with their family about their own experiences. In addition, the findings agree with the findings of Rolfe (2020) which suggest that paying close attention and promptly responding to a child's demands, especially during infancy, promotes a sense of security and consistency.

Consistent and punctual care from caregivers has a beneficial effect on the development of a strong emotional bond between a kid and their caregiver. The resilient learners were capable of discerning the emotional accessibility and assistance they receive from caregivers. The study revealed that learners who felt secure experienced feelings of comfort and affection from their caregiver. According to Bosmans and Borelli's (2022) research, children derive advantages from emotional availability since it helps them regulate their emotions and feel understood. The research findings indicated that learners who live in secure households with their parents and siblings exhibited emotional accessibility, in contrast to learners from insecure households. This aligns with the findings of Venezia's (2023) which emphasizes the importance of good interactions and playful involvement between caregivers and children in promoting the development of secure bonds. This study finding aligns with Bowlby's theoretical assertion which posits that a safe attachment consists of the qualities of availability, responsiveness, and accessibility. These factors are essential for the optimal emotional and social growth of a child, and emotional availability enhances the level of closeness between parents and children. The implication of this finding is that parents should receive crucial educational support from the school governing body regarding the need of emotional availability for the healthy emotional development of learners and the promotion of positive emotional bonding.

According to the research findings, the second component identified is the level of support and encouragement provided by parents. The qualitative study revealed that support is a deliberate set of principles that families must purposefully prioritize. The results demonstrated that

support has a beneficial role in the emotional development of children, leading to enhanced self-esteem and academic success. According to the study, learners who receive support develop stable attachments and maintain a positive perspective on life. This finding aligns with Zain et al., (2023) which demonstrated a significant positive correlation between support and motivation and the degree of confidence in baby care practices. The study found that caregivers played a vital role as a support system, and the level of support provided was positively linked to the mother's ability to manage infant care (Zain et al., 2023). The findings aligned with Bronfenbrenner's theoretical argument, which asserts that the interactions within microsystems are often intimate and play a vital role in promoting and nurturing a child's growth. School counselors should create a program aimed at educating schools and parents about the significance of providing support and inspiration.

The findings also revealed that the provision of fundamental necessities by parents significantly influences the development of a secure attachment style. Research indicates that children who live with both parents in a stable environment have improved living conditions in terms of meeting their fundamental needs. Furthermore, these children demonstrate superior adaptation skills compared to those from dysfunctional family systems. This discovery aligns with the Castetter (2020) study which revealed that children who are raised without the involvement of both parents experience subsequent developmental repercussions. The results also indicated that the provision of fundamental necessities ensures the life and security of learners. This finding aligns with the attachment theory, as proposed by Bergin and Bergin (2009), which suggests that attachment serves two important functions for children. Firstly, it provides a sense of security, allowing children to freely explore their surroundings. Secondly, while all children have a natural desire for security, attachment helps them strike a balance between this need and their inherent drive to explore their environment. The implication of this finding is that the Department of Basic Education should offer essential resources to underprivileged schools and consistently maintain feeding programs in schools.

The study findings also revealed that learners have a tendency to develop robust emotional connections with individuals upon whom they depend for safeguarding. As previously stated, protection plays a role in ensuring a stable bond. The results suggested that learners who feel secure have a sense of safety and protection in their home environment. In agreement, Wang, Yang, and Zhang (2021) argued that children who feel protected are more likely to engage in active exploration of their environment, participate in educational activities, and develop their

cognitive abilities with confidence. This finding agrees with Bowlby's (1982) theoretical argument that the fundamental concept of attachment is to develop relationships that promote survival for the benefit of newborns, who are the most vulnerable individuals in the group, in order to provide them with protection and form a link. The implication of this finding is that school governing bodies and school leaders should instruct caregivers on the significance and several rationales for protection, including safety, attachment, trust, and decreased worry.

6.4.3 Factors contributing to insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools

The study findings indicate that various factors, including single parenting, fatherlessness, dysfunctional families, conflict, poverty, lack of parental support and involvement, non-supportive cultural practices, lack of parental love, identity crisis, and lack of role models, have a detrimental impact on children and contribute to the development of insecure attachment styles. The outcomes of the qualitative study indicated that the majority of learners with insecure attachment patterns originated from households with single parents. Research indicates that children raised in single parent households are deprived of the complete experience of being nurtured by both parents. This discovery indicated that a substantial majority of the learners were prone to experiencing shame and a sense of burden due to not having the chance and advantage of being raised by both parents.

This finding aligns with Castetter (2020), which revealed that children who are raised without the involvement of both parents experience adverse developmental outcomes, including diminished self-esteem and feelings of shame. Furthermore, it was apparent that the absence of paternal role models posed a difficulty for other learners. The findings show that these experiences further resulted in unstable attachment and difficulties in coping at school. The study findings indicated that the learners had a sense of neglect from their fathers. According to Bowlby, a caregiver who is sensitive pays attention to the child's signals, understands their perspective, and swiftly and correctly reacts to their needs (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Therefore, children experience insecure attachment when they do not have a proper representation. The implication of this finding is that schools and school counsellors should offer socio-emotional support and safeguard learners from developing insecurities that could adversely affect their perception of the world and their attachment style.

The study's qualitative findings indicate that certain learners encounter dysfunctions in their home environment, which then leads to disruptive behavior at school. This aligns with Moretti's (2004) study which demonstrated that insecure adolescents prefer to avoid intimate connections and are susceptible to unexpected episodes of anger and aggression. In addition, they may display unpredictable conduct, such as instigating physical confrontations and causing damage to nearby things. The study also revealed that unresolved family conflicts contribute to learners experiencing feelings of neglect and lack of love. In agreement, Reisz, Duschinsky, and Siegel (2018) argued that insecure attachment can be observed in violent family systems as well as in less extreme situations marked by major dysfunction, chaos, or high levels of stress. This discovery indicates that a deficiency of affection and dysfunctional circumstances contribute to heightened levels of worry and disarray in individuals who are acquiring knowledge. Consistent with this finding, Moretti (2004) asserted that learners face difficulties in forming an attachment with their caregivers due to experiencing notable levels of dread and anxiety. The implication of this finding is that school governing bodies must actively promote family participation and support, as well as provide teachers with education on trauma-informed and dysfunctionality-informed practices.

Based on the findings of this study, it was observed that families who experience poverty are more prone to encountering various stressors that contribute to insecure attachments in parent-child interactions and more challenging parenting situations. The findings also indicated that this, in turn, can impact the quality of attachment poverty, since homes headed by a single parent are unable to establish a secure bond for children. This aligns with the findings of Wray (2015), which stated that poverty has the ability to influence the upbringing of individuals residing in impoverished conditions. In a similar vein, Karakaş and Dağlı (2019) reported that potential factors that may contribute to an insecure parent-child attachment encompass inconsistent caregiver responsiveness, neglect, insensitive care, and poverty. The study findings indicate that poverty has a detrimental impact on the majority of learners, leading to the development of sadness and anxiety. The study found that children raised in impoverished homes are more prone to experiencing adverse stresses, such as insecure bonds and more severe parenting conditions. Poverty-induced stress and low comprehension of child development, often experienced alongside educational deprivation, can directly contribute to insecure attachment (Jensen, 2017). Financial deprivation can hinder a parent's capacity to meet their child's requirements and may encompass circumstances such as unemployment or insufficient

financial means. Therefore, poverty may be linked to a higher probability of experiencing unstable attachment (Casandy et al., 2001).

Consistent with this findings, Bronfenbrenner (2005) theory argued the macrosystem, which is a system that indicates how cultural factors impact a child's development, such as socioeconomic status, wealth, poverty, or geographical location. Similarly, Evans (2020) suggested that a child residing in a developing nation would have a distinct developmental process compared to a youngster residing in a more affluent one. The significance of this discovery is that school managers should identify, evaluate, and comprehend the requirements of learners from impoverished households and offer tailored assistance. In order to mitigate the emotional and psychological effects of poverty and alleviate the associated stigma, it is imperative for school counselors to intervene.

The study findings indicated a deficiency in parental support and engagement. Based on the research, it was seen that parents had a deficiency in their understanding of how to provide support to learners. The results indicated that parents of learners with insecure learning tendencies demonstrate less engagement and assistance in their children's development. The absence of parental support can be attributed to insufficient educational qualifications. According to Ogbugo-Ololube's (2016), there is a significant association between the socioeconomic and educational background of parents and the academic and social achievement of pupils.

The study findings demonstrated that insufficient parental participation has a detrimental impact on the child's education and academic success. This aligns with the Ugarte and Hastings (2022) in which they posited that inconsistent caregiving leads to varying levels of availability, which might create uncertainty for the child and a lack of support. The implication of this finding is that parents must be provided with the necessary tools and assistance to enhance their parenting abilities, so improving the quality of care they provide to their children. Schools can promote consistent contact with parents and provide parental engagement initiatives such as workshops, trainings, and support groups.

The findings uncovered cultural practices that hinder positive growth in learners. Research indicates that learners bring their diverse cultural customs to school, which might potentially hinder their learning and overall development. This finding aligns with Bronfenbrenner's

(2005) theoretical argument, which suggests that the cultural practices and beliefs that individuals are surrounded by can have an impact on their beliefs and the events that occur in their lives. The study indicates that cultural beliefs are a component of the macrosystem and have the potential to impact a child's development. Based on this discovery, it is hypothesized that children who are dejected may feel discouraged due to their family situation and lack optimism about their ability to make progress. The implication of this finding is that school managers and governing bodies should actively prohibit non-supportive cultural behaviors that may contribute to the development of insecure attachment styles in children.

The findings indicated that a lack of affection from one's family might result in the development of several forms of insecurity in learners, including a negative self-perception that can contribute to the adoption of unfavorable attachment patterns. In agreement, Macfie, Brumariu, and Lyons-Ruth (2015) assert that when a kid's needs are consistently met without significant obstacles, they will form a solid attachment to their caregiver. Conversely, a lack of affection engenders dread in the child. In addition, Colmer, Rutherford and Murphy (2011) contended that if a child's demands are only partially fulfilled, they would develop a less secure type of attachment, such as anxious/avoidant, resistant, or disorganized attachments. Evidence indicated that learners who experience affection in their household likely to possess a favorable perception of their own self-image. Concurring with Bowlby's perspective (Bowlby, 1969/1982), love cultivates a favorable bond. These individuals can provide protection from harm and a secure place for exploring the surroundings, which contributes to personal development in daily life (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). The implication of these findings is that schools can demonstrate authentic care and concern for learners who experience low self-esteem by providing emotional assistance and affirmation. School leaders can provide instruction in the identification, articulation, and regulation of emotions, as well as fostering a sense of self-value.

Based on the results, it can be concluded that insecure learners do not have positive role models. Research has determined that poverty, violence, and crime have a detrimental impact on learners. The qualitative findings demonstrated that the presence of positive role models in children's homes fosters a desire for personal improvement and instills a sense of enthusiasm for the future among learners. According to Bureau and Moss (2010), the child develops a steadfast conviction in the continuous existence of the attachment figure, which results in heightened interest to explore their surroundings and engage in new educational experiences.

This leads to enhanced social integration. Attachment experiences have a lasting impact on an individual's overall well-being and the quality of relationships throughout their life (Doyle & Cicchetti, 2017). Consistent with these findings, Bronfenbrenner's (2005) theoretical argument that the microsystem, which encompasses the child's immediate environment, holds the greatest influence within the ecological systems theory. This is due to the fact that relationships within the microsystem are characterized by mutual influence, whereby the child can be impacted by others in their environment. The interactions within microsystems are frequently intimate and play a critical role in nurturing and facilitating the child's growth. A child's positive relationship with their parents has a beneficial impact on the child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The implication of these findings is that educational institutions and community authorities have the ability to offer guidance and role models who exemplify constructive principles and conduct. The implication is that school managers have the ability to extend invitations to guest lecturers and create mentorship programs, pairing learners with influential role models and caring people.

The study findings also indicated that insecurely attached learners have an identity crisis due to home-based variables, such as lack of affection from caregivers. The results indicated that an identity crisis plays a role in learners developing negative perceptions of themselves. The findings indicate that identity crisis arises as a result of unaddressed and unresolved insecurities that learners acquire from their homes. Consistent with existing literature, Fung (2023) found that possessing a positive self-esteem and identity is crucial for developing successful social relationships. This is because it provides individuals with a sense of security and self-confidence, while a lack of successful connections can lead to an identity crisis. Moreover, in accordance with the attachment theory, having a compassionate and attentive caregiver provides comfort and a sense of self, especially in times of unease, fear, or uncertainty. Moreover, attachment exerts a substantial influence on the formation of identity, the development of social skills, and the establishment of interpersonal relationships (Adar, Davidof & Elkana, 2022). The implication of this finding is that school managers have the responsibility to teach parents about the principles and techniques of management. School leaders have the ability to educate staff on culturally responsive practices and the formation of identity.

6.4.4. Social competence of grade 10 learners with secure attachment style

Based on study findings, learners who have secure attachment styles demonstrated strong social competence by exhibiting effective anger management, proficient social skills, effective communication, strong interpersonal skills, high self-esteem, positive self-efficacy, excellent academic performance, and high emotional intelligence. The findings suggested that learners who have a stable attachment style demonstrate effective anger management skills and are less prone to negative reactions while experiencing rage. The findings revealed that certain learners employ the strategy of generating content on Tik-Tok and engaging in activities to manage their anger. These behavioural choices increase learners' ability to regulate their anger in challenging circumstances. This aligns with the findings in the research, as Greenman (2022) suggested that persons who have a secure attachment style often demonstrate more resilience when faced with challenges in life. The findings revealed that effective anger control is a component of strong emotional and social competence, as it is a skill that learners are actively acquiring. Moreover, persons who possess a secure attachment style have the ability to boldly and efficiently express and manage their emotions, while also displaying attentiveness and responsiveness towards the needs of others (Hong & Park 2012). Individuals who possess secure attachment types exhibit a significant degree of flexibility in managing their emotions and handling changes in relationships, including transitions, life events, or new phases (Cook, 2016). The implication of this finding is that life orientation facilitators and teachers should instruct individuals on coping mechanisms, encourage a mindset focused on personal development, and advocate for social-emotional learning, including self-awareness and effective communication.

The study finding also reported that strong social skills are positively associated with high social competence. In agreement, Gonzale (2022) identified various components of social competence, such as social values, positive self-identity, interpersonal skills, self-regulation, planning and decision making, emotional intelligence, social skills, empathy, adaptability, communication skills, problem-solving and conflict resolution, building and maintaining relationships, and cultural competence. The results indicated that those who are safe learners possess strong social aptitude, including effective communication, socialization, and respectful interpersonal relationships. In agreement, Flannery and Smith (2017), argued that improving social competence can lead to better communication, more happiness in relationships, and greater overall well-being. In addition, Berg et al., (2017) reported that a child's social competence is affected by their approach motivation in social situations, which is seen in their keen interest in social activities. The implication of this finding is that school leaders to establish

a secure and nurturing atmosphere, promote independence and empowerment, and work together with families to establish a supportive network that extends outside the school.

The findings of this study also showed that secure learners had a favourable self-esteem, self-efficacy, and performed effectively in group settings. This aligns with the findings of Howe and Betts (2023), which suggest that when children form solid attachments with their primary caregivers, it indicates the development of self-efficacy and a strong emotional bond. Based on research, successful learners consistently meet deadlines for their school assignments and possess a strong sense of self-assurance in their academic abilities. In addition, Fung (2023) suggested that having attachment figures provides a secure base, allowing individuals to navigate and engage effectively in social interactions. Cultivating a secure attachment fosters the growth of effective communication abilities. The study determined that self-efficacy is crucial in enabling learners to actively pursue their objectives. Bergin and Bergin (2009) argued that children who are securely bonded feel at ease asking support from their caregivers and develop into individuals who possess self-assurance, self-drive, and autonomy. Similarly, Mikulincer and Shaver (2007), argued that learners who are secure possess a stable and robust perception of their own worth. They also cultivate a strong sense of self-confidence and trust in both themselves and others. The implication of this finding is that educators and learner councils should develop initiatives that cultivate a feeling of direction and significance, in order to assist learners in discovering their interests and principles. Schools have the ability to promote and cultivate a favourable school culture and mindset.

The study findings also reported that learners who felt secure had a high level of academic achievement. These proficient learners excel in their academic pursuits and exhibit confidence in expressing themselves and engaging in many activities. The results determined that strong academic performance is an essential cognitive ability that contributes to social competence, allowing learners to excel in school and feel self-assured in pursuing their skills and setting ambitious objectives. This was incongruent with the literary works of multiple authors. Research consistently indicates that children with a secure attachment tend to exhibit positive communication patterns, experience reduced levels of anxiety and frustration, employ effective strategies to cope with distress, and demonstrate higher levels of academic and social competence (Stanojević & Nedeljković, 2020). Additionally, persons who are secure tend to exhibit traits of curiosity, imagination, and high levels of achievement. Secure attachment allows children to explore their world without fear or hesitation (Sterkenburg, van Rensburg &

van Deventer, 2011). The implication of this finding is that educators must establish a conducive atmosphere that fosters learners' academic accomplishments. They should also offer extracurricular opportunities and motivate learners to explore their interests and cultivate new abilities.

Finally, the findings indicated that secure learners possess a high level of emotional intelligence and demonstrate good communication skills, as well as the ability to overcome problems and resolve conflicts. The results suggested that secure learners exhibit a favourable disposition, a capacity to assess circumstances, and effectively react. These behavioural impacts indicate that learners possess the capacity to manage and govern their emotions. The study found that learners from stable households face no challenges in cultivating their emotional intelligence, unlike learners with insecure attachments. These findings were consistent with the Ahsan's (2023) study which argued that individuals who possess a high level of social competence exhibit a diverse range of social skills that enable them to effectively interact and form constructive connections with others. The skills included in this list are active listening, verbal communication, nonverbal communication, conflict resolution, and the ability to interpret social cues. They possess the capability to settle conflicts and effectively tackle interpersonal difficulties. According to Spitzberg and Cupach (2012), they have the ability to skilfully handle conflicts by seeking solutions that benefit all parties involved. Finally, social competence allows children to develop a positive sense of self, build positive relationships, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, succeed academically, advance in their careers, maintain emotional well-being, adapt to new situations, gain acceptance from peers, understand and appreciate different cultures, experience life satisfaction, develop resilience, and achieve healthy development (Ahmed, Hamzah & Abdullah, 2020). Therefore, this finding implies that teachers can create chances for social interaction and teamwork, fostering the development of communication and collaboration abilities.

6.4.5: Social incompetence of grade 10 learners with insecure attachment style

The study findings revealed that learners with insecure attachment patterns exhibited social incompetence. The findings revealed that these individuals displayed social incompetence among learners include low self-esteem, antisocial behaviours, aggressive behaviours, poor anger control, poor interpersonal skills, lack of emotional competence, external locus of control.

These findings align with the Rubin and Chronis-Tuscano, (2021), which identified various signs and factors associated with social incompetence.

One of the primary factors identified in the study was a lack of self-confidence. The findings indicated that learners had a deficiency in self-assurance and were unable to have faith in their own abilities. The findings suggest that the root causes of low self-esteem among insecure learners can be attributed to their fear of rejection and intimidation. These learners experienced feelings of guilt and fear due to concerns about social acceptance, abandonment, and fitting in. The findings determined that the emotions of guilt and rejection are factors that contribute to learners experiencing challenges with their self-esteem. The findings corroborated those of Bergin and Bergin (2009), which suggested that those with insecure attachment styles are more prone to experiencing anxiety or terror in response to routine events or daily activities. Individuals with an anxious/ambivalent attachment type often feel nervous about being abandoned and have doubts about the reliability of their caregivers and others in their lives. Furthermore, Hong and Park (2012) contended that children with low self-esteem may experience apprehension about the reliable satisfaction of their needs, leading to an intensified emotional reaction due to their heightened sensitivity to perceived risks of being rejected or abandoned (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2010). This finding implies that schools should promote mental health assistance by offering access to counselling or therapy sessions and by educating staff on how to support children with low self-esteem.

The second component identified in the study findings was the presence of antisocial and aggressive behaviour. The findings revealed instances of deviant behaviour, including physical altercations, emotional outbursts, defiance, theft, and dishonesty. These learners exhibit a high degree of self-criticism and are also prone to being disrespectful and verbally aggressive towards others, intentionally seeking to do harm. These findings align with Harber's (2001) assertion that schools in South Africa have been impacted by violence, leading to the upbringing of children in insecure circumstances and their subsequent engagement in aggressive behaviour towards others. Furthermore, Wray (2015) argued that external stressors, such as precarious housing or community violence, might have an impact on the strength of the bonds between parents and children, potentially resulting in insecure attachment. The implication of this finding is that schools can help learners develop the ability to regulate their emotions, become self-reliant, and form meaningful connections with others, all of which are important for developing secure attachments in the future. Furthermore, the third component identified in the

qualitative study findings was poor anger control exhibited by learners with an insecure attachment style. The study findings indicated that anger frequently co-occurred with aggressive behavioural inclinations, such as a proclivity to vocally express anger, a desire to physically strike someone, and a wish to cause harm to someone. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Girme et al. (2021), which suggests that persons with insecure attachment styles may experience challenges in effectively managing disputes and may be more prone to expressing anger. Insecure youngsters may face challenges in effectively communicating their demands, engaging in productive negotiations, and finding mutually beneficial solutions in social situations (Wray, 2015). This finding implies that schools counsellors should develop behavioural support strategies to effectively address rage outbursts and promote positive behaviours and attitudes.

Based on the findings, it was seen that learners were unsuccessful in their ability to communicate with people and establish friendships. These findings were in line with other sources of information on insecure attachment types. In agreement, Park and Schepp (2015) found that insecure attachment patterns can have negative consequences on individuals' emotional and social development. These consequences include reduced self-perception, isolation from social interactions, and emotional turmoil. Likewise, those lacking interpersonal skills may feel anxious about being rejected or abandoned, making it challenging for them to engage comfortably with their peers or form positive relationships (Sprenger, 2020). Furthermore, Maalouf (2022) found that individuals who have insecure attachment styles, particularly those with anxious-avoidant attachments, tend to actively avoid social interactions out of fear of rejection or disappointment. This avoidance can hinder the development of their social skills. The implication of this finding is that Life- Orientation teachers should champion for peer mediation programs, which can provide learners with the skills to effectively resolve disagreements and navigate relationships.

In addition, the findings uncovered a lack of emotional competence among learners with insecure attachment, because learners struggle to effectively manage negative emotions. According to Maalouf (2022), individuals with insecure attachment may face difficulties in effectively expressing their needs and emotions. Similarly, Evraire, Dozois and Wilde (2022) found that those with insecure attachments encounter challenges when it comes to displaying empathy and participating in perspective-taking. This finding implies that it is necessary to implement counselling and therapy services in township schools in order to offer support to

individuals who require assistance in dealing with underlying concerns. The department of basic education has the ability to integrate emotional intelligence into academic instruction.

The final component identified in the study findings was an external locus of control. The study findings elucidated the mechanism of peer influence on the socialization and personal growth of adolescents. Research findings suggest that individuals with an insecure attachment style face difficulties in making independent decisions and tend to excessively depend on their peers. Based on the findings, it was concluded that insecure learners struggle to handle peer pressure and tend to attribute their circumstances to others, rather than taking responsibility for their own actions. This finding is consistent with Spokas and Heimberg (2009), which concluded that having an external locus of control can have negative consequences. In a similar vein, Evraire, Dozois and Wilde (2022) discovered that persons with insecure attachment styles may have a proclivity for seeking excessive reassurance and praise from others, relying on external sources to establish a sense of security. To put it simply, individuals who have insecure attachment may exhibit less social resilience, struggle to bounce back from social challenges or setbacks, and their lack of a strong foundation in early attachment experiences might affect their ability to cope with social pressures (Girme, et al., 2021). The implication of this finding is that teachers have the potential to create parenting programs or raise awareness in the community. These initiatives can equip parents with good bonding practices, leading to improved development and emotional security in their children.

6.4.6 HOW SCHOOLS COULD BE A SECURE BASE FOR LEARNERS FROM INSECURE ATTACHMENTS

The study findings also indicated various solutions and recommendations that could assist schools to be a secure base for all learners. The research findings formed part of psychological and social support and can be essential to build a secure base for learners from insecure.

6.4.6.1 Provision of psychological support for secure base for learners with insecure attachment styles

The findings revealed that township schools should offer social support to learners who have fragile parent-child ties. The findings indicate social support to include fighting against poverty,

social development initiatives, life development initiatives, teamwork and teacher trainings.. In agreement, Sørlie, Hagen, and Nordahl (2021) reported that the ongoing development of social competence in individuals with secure attachments is impacted by favourable social encounters. Therefore, it is hoped that these findings would provide a favourable social experience for all learners and help schools attain an improved atmosphere.

The study findings indicate that the most effective learning environment outcome is achieved by fostering learner motivation through positive reinforcement, such as praise, rather than solely focusing on identifying errors. The findings suggested a deficiency of positive reinforcement in classrooms. The findings indicated that employing positive reinforcement can effectively eliminate negative behaviour in learners and motivate them to acquire knowledge from their peers. The studies also demonstrated that positive reinforcement can effectively rectify expected behaviour from individuals. Therefore, it may be inferred that schools play a crucial role in fostering a culture of positive reinforcement within classrooms. This aligns with the existing literature. Several researchers (Oxley and Holden, 2021; Schieltz, et al., 2020) argue that schools can promote positive discipline and encourage desirable behaviour by implementing techniques that focus on instructing appropriate conduct rather than relying on punitive measures. It is implied that the school administration team must consistently provide training to educators on the use of positive reinforcement for learners in classrooms.

The study findings indicate that schools should cultivate a strong sense of self-worth and confidence by implementing positive psychology training. The discovery suggests that undergoing positive psychology training can provide assistance to learners throughout challenging periods of personal growth and enhance their self-assurance. The study suggests that schools can effectively cultivate confidence and competence by being purposeful and conscious of their role. Furthermore, based on literature, efforts that encourage teachers to engage in introspective activities and develop self-awareness can enhance their ability to recognize and treat learners' emotional needs. Teachers can improve their understanding by closely observing learners' behaviour and actively participating in reflective discussions (Mumford & Dikilitaş, 2020). The findings also suggested that parental advice and assistance are necessary to foster the implementation of psychological training. This aligns with the findings of Green et al. (2021), who emphasized the importance of schools creating a safe and inclusive environment that values diversity. The study findings indicated that teachers have the ability to support all learners by establishing a safe and stable foundation through active

engagement and attentiveness. Research has asserted that being responsive might expedite the progress and social advancement of learners. In agreement, Castro and Pereira (2019) argued that teachers should deliberately endeavour to cultivate more intimacy and comprehension in their interactions. In addition, maintaining a regular level of responsiveness can serve as a source of motivation for learners and contribute to a sense of security inside the classroom, providing a stable foundation for all learners. According to Schiavon et al., (2020), schools should focus on developing positive relationships between individuals by providing training in positive psychology. Similarly, Duong et al. (2021) suggest that schools should establish regular and structured schedules, along with clear guidelines, to create a sense of anticipation for learners who lack confidence. The implication of this finding is that schools must purposefully make themselves accessible to learners in order to foster a sense of trust and appropriately address their needs.

Moreover, the study findings indicated that teachers should establish personalized learning, where learning is utilized as a means to enhance learners' self-assurance. The findings indicated that teachers have a duty and obligation to intentionally raise learners' awareness of their capabilities and also permit them to make errors. The findings indicated that personalized learning would have a substantial impact on addressing the psychological requirements of learners and promoting important competence characteristics, such as resilience and independence. In agreement, Kennedy (2008) argued that pastoral care is essential for fostering individualized learning and building connections among learners in order to meet their social and emotional needs. Similarly, Gimbert, et al., (2023) also suggested that educators need to be properly educated to create secure and supportive learning environments. The implication of this finding is that teachers must be provided with support to accommodate individual learners and establish a healthy and inclusive classroom environment.

6.4.6.2 Provision of social support for secure base for learners with insecure attachments

The findings revealed that township schools should offer social support to learners who have fragile parent-child ties. The findings indicate social support to include fighting against poverty, social development initiatives, life development initiatives, teamwork and teacher trainings. Furthermore, Sørlie, Hagen, and Nordahl (2021) corroborated these findings, demonstrating that favourable social encounters, conducive environments, and continuous social education have the potential to eradicate insecure attachment patterns.

The study findings indicate that efforts to combat poverty can significantly contribute to meeting the fundamental needs of all learners, including provisions for meals, uniforms, and stationery. The findings suggested that food programs had a significant impact on learners who face economic hardship. In agreement, Nel Noddings (2015) argued that schools have a fundamental duty to offer nurturing care to children. By providing comprehensive care, schools can foster the preparedness of young individuals to assimilate educational content. Moreover, Ferreira, Martinsone and Talić (2020), schools should support programs that address poverty and provide a peaceful atmosphere to promote social and personal development. These initiatives should prioritize social and life skills development. The implication of this finding is that schools and community learners need to address poverty comprehensively and fairly in order to reduce the multifaceted obstacle of learners being impacted both at home and at school. The study findings indicated that trips, sports, and cultural activities are social development initiatives that can facilitate learners in experiencing comprehensive development and physical education. The study findings revealed a need for the implementation of social activities in township schools. The qualitative study findings suggested that sports provide a suitable platform for the development of life skills and character, which can enhance individuals' personal growth and positively impact their schooling experience. This aligns with the perspective of Maluleke (2021), who posited that interventions such as social skills training, counselling, and support from educators, mental health professionals, and peers can be beneficial in addressing social incompetence and promoting social growth. The implication of this finding is for school management teams to reinvigorate social development programs.

The study findings indicate that life development programs may be essential for providing learners with life skills beyond formal education, which can enhance their social competence. Furthermore, the study's findings indicated that Life-Orientation, as a learning area, might be deliberately utilized as a subject to facilitate transformation and serve as a program for personal growth. Moreover, the study findings emphasized the significance of school counselling involving proficient social workers in facilitating learners' personal development and advancement. This aligns with the findings of Duong et al., (2021) which advocated for schools to provide ongoing counselling services and assure the availability of school counsellors to support learners dealing with emotional and social challenges. The implication of this finding is that the department of education should employ additional school counsellors and skilled social workers in each school to provide assistance to all learners and foster a conducive school

atmosphere.

The study findings highlighted the significance of teamwork in classrooms as an expansion of knowledge acquisition from peers and the development of social skills. The findings suggest that teamwork can foster a collaborative learning environment, where learners actively engage with others and benefit from their interactions. In agreement, Noble and McGrath (2011), argued that social competence can be developed by actively engaging in social interactions with peers, motivated by a desire for positive findings and a lack of reluctance towards such situations. Furthermore, Pellegrini and Blatchford (2014) demonstrated that schools have a vital function in enabling children's social relationships by bringing them together. The findings revealed a deficiency in the knowledge of teachers and school managers on the training of teachers, particularly in relation to understanding the needs of learners. This aligns with the existing body of literature, which asserts that gaining knowledge about learners provides a significant emphasis on the ability to accurately identify and understand human learning, motivation, and child development (Nezhad & Vahedi, 2011). Furthermore, research suggests that providing teacher training improves understanding of attachment theory, specifically its impact on learners' socio-emotional development. It is crucial for educators to receive training on how early attachment experiences affect children's behaviour, interpersonal relationships, and academic advancement (Garcia-Rodriguez, Redín & Abaitua, 2023; Harlow, 2021). The implication of this finding is that the Department of Education should offer more teacher development training support to all teachers and school leaders on support services for learners from insecure attachment homes.

6.5 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This section provides the conclusions that have been deduced from the findings made in the course of this study. This section will show conclusions on the forms of attachments styles possessed among grade 10 learners, factors contributing to insecure and secure attachment styles, social competences of grade 10 learners from insecure and secure parent-child attachments and how schools could be a secure base for learners with insecure attachment styles.

6.5.1: Forms of attachments styles are possessed among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng west township schools

The study concludes that learners from township schools face several obstacles that prevent them from being self-assured, respectful, confident, actively participating in class, and achieving high proficiency in both formal and informal assessments. Thus, learners who come from families with avoidant attachment tend to encounter familial dysfunction, inconsistency, rivalry, lack of support from close relatives, and limited communication. Moreover, learners with anxious and disorganized attachment styles endure distressing pasts and ongoing experiences, unlike individuals with other attachment types, resulting in greater suffering.

Furthermore, this study asserts that the lack of sensitivity and presence from caregivers has a detrimental impact on learners' behaviour, as well as their social and emotional development. Therefore, it is crucial to educate parents, offer them assistance, and give them with direction regarding the significance of secure attachment style in order to aid youngsters and enhance their interpersonal connections. The study also concludes that disorganized learners may exhibit violent, mischievous, and obstinate behaviour at home due to a lack of support, possibly stemming from feelings of anger and confusion resulting from neglect by caregivers. This situation may have been altered if schools were able to implement suitable counselling programs to facilitate the early identification of learners with insecure attachment patterns, thereby enabling the implementation of the most effective therapies. The families' incapacity to effectively safeguard learners against insecure attachment patterns can be attributed to a deficiency in support, awareness of secure attachment styles, financial resources, and stable family structures.

6.5.2: Factors contributing to insecure and secure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in Sedibeng wet township schools

The study concluded that emotional availability, support, supplying basic needs, protection, and stable parents have a significant influence to secure attachment style. According to research, having emotional support at home is essential for learners to succeed. The study found that learners who felt secure experienced emotions of comfort and attachment from their caregiver. This fostered a strong bond, which profoundly influenced their existence and psychological well-being.

The study's findings concluded that parental support has a significant impact on teenagers' motivation for success and contributes to the child's overall growth and confidence in exploring new opportunities. According to research, children who get support, love, and respect tend to have a greater sense of security and optimism. Secure learners in township schools residing with both parents and/or extended family experienced enhanced protection, access to resources, close supervision, consistent caregiver presence, and effective communication. The findings indicate that learners who reside with siblings, parents, and extended family members benefit from emotional warmth, assistance, and direction in their physical, behavioural, and emotional growth. Moreover, providing essential provisions fosters secure attachment and fulfils the physiological requirements of children, which are vital for their well-being and growth.

The study also concludes that support is a conscious collection of concepts that families must intentionally emphasize. Support plays an advantageous function in the emotional growth of children, resulting in improved self-esteem and academic achievement. Moreover, learners who receive assistance at home form secure emotional connections and have an optimistic outlook on life. The study determined that children residing in a stable setting with both parents experience enhanced living conditions and exhibit higher adaptive abilities in comparison to children from dysfunctional family systems.

The study findings indicate that factors such as single parenting, fatherlessness, dysfunctional families, conflict, poverty, lack of parental support and involvement, non-supportive cultural practices, lack of parental love, identity crisis, and lack of role models, have a negative effect on children and contribute to the development of insecure attachment styles. The findings of the qualitative study indicated that a significant proportion of learners with insecure attachment patterns came from single-parent households. This finding indicated that a majority of learners being susceptible to feelings of shame and a sense of burden. Moreover, it was determined that the lack of ordinary mentors and paternal figures presented a challenge for fellow learners. The study further concludes that having positive role models in children's households promotes a motivation for self-improvement and cultivates a sense of optimism for the future in learners. The research indicated that these experiences led to insecure attachment and challenges in adapting to school. Consequently, children develop anxious attachment when they lack a suitable representation.

The study concludes that specific learners in township schools have dysfunctions in their home environment, resulting in disruptive behaviour at school. This finding determined that a lack of affection and dysfunctional conditions are detrimental elements that contribute to increased levels of anxiety and disorder in persons. Moreover, the study concludes that poverty is a contributing factor to insecure bonds in parent-child relationships and more difficult parenting settings. According to the study, poverty has a deleterious effect on most learners, resulting in the emergence of feelings of despair and worry. The study found that children growing up in disadvantaged households are more susceptible to encountering detrimental pressures, such as insecure attachments and harsher parenting circumstances.

The study findings revealed a lack of parental support and involvement. The study concludes that parents lacked a comprehensive understanding of how to effectively help learners. This was exemplified by a decreased level of involvement and support in their children's growth and progress. The study also determined that the lack of parental support can be ascribed to inadequate educational qualifications. According to the study findings, a lack of parental involvement has a negative effect on the child's schooling and academic achievement. The study determined that certain cultural habits impede good growth in the majority of learners, potentially hindering their learning and overall development. Moreover, the study also determined that a deficiency in love leads to the emergence of many types of insecurity in learners, such as a pessimistic self-image that might contribute to the adoption of insecure attachment patterns.

Finally, the study uncovered that learners with insecure attachment experience an identity crisis as a finding of home-based factors, such as a lack of affection from caregivers. The findings indicated that an identity crisis contributes to learners forming unfavourable self-perceptions. This crisis emerges from unattended and unresolved insecurities that learners inherit from their households.

6.5.3: Social competences of grade 10 learners from insecure and secure parent-child attachments

Briefly, the study concludes that, secure learners exhibited strong social competence by demonstrating effective anger management, proficient social skills, effective communication, strong interpersonal skills, high self-esteem, positive self-efficacy, excellent academic

performance, and high emotional intelligence. Parental participation was the key component that contributed to the learners' social competence. The study concludes that there is a positive correlation between strong social skills and high social competence, and these abilities are acquired within the household. The findings revealed that those who are safe learners exhibit a high level of social competence, which encompasses proficient communication skills, successful social interaction, and the ability to maintain respectful relationships with others. These learners actively engage in classroom participation, thereby enhancing their social competence. The study also determined that secure learners exhibit a robust sense of harmonic coexistence with their classmates. These learners are adept at cultivating friendships and establishing trust with others. This also results in a positive self-image, confidence in one's abilities, and effective performance in group situations. Research indicates that only learners who are successful continuously adhere to deadlines for their school tasks and demonstrate a high level of confidence in their academic ability. In conclusion, the qualitative study found that learners in township schools who have a secure learning environment tend to exhibit high levels of academic accomplishment and great academic performance. This can be attributed to their supporting family background.

Furthermore, the study concludes that insecure attachment styles have a major impact on social ineptitude, because the findings revealed a deficiency in self-assurance among learners who had unstable attachments. Most learners exhibited a lack of self-assurance and were unable to trust in their own talents. The findings determined that the primary factors contributing to low self-esteem in insecure learners are their apprehension of rejection and intimidation, which are associated with their attachment styles. According to the research, these learners felt shame and dread because they were worried about being accepted by others, being abandoned, and fitting in. As a result, they were unsuccessful in developing their social skills. Moreover, the study revealed a robust link between antisocial behaviour and aggressive behaviour. The findings revealed that some learners resorted to violence in order to deal with their difficulties at school. The research findings indicate that learners who struggle with antisocial behaviours have a deficiency in social competence and display behaviour patterns acquired from their family environment.

In addition, the study concludes that learners with an insecure attachment style displayed poor anger management, which was identified as the third component of social incompetence. The study findings indicated a strong correlation between rage and aggressive behavioural

tendencies. Thus, it was determined that these learners displayed a substantial level of anger in the classroom, resulting in physical fights and a disregard for authority. According to the findings, a lack of control over anger was identified as the main cause of inadequate interpersonal skills, which negatively affects social development and hampers the learners' ability to form positive relationships with others.

The study also concludes that a significant number of learners who have inadequate social skills tend to seclude themselves and encounter difficulties in communicating effectively. Furthermore, the qualitative inquiry revealed a deficiency in emotional competence among learners who have insecure attachment. Research indicates that learners encounter difficulties in properly regulating negative emotions. The study found that learners with emotional ineptitude exhibit a propensity to reject people and a lack of understanding of others' emotions.

In conclusion, the study argues that an external locus of control has a notable impact on social ineptitude. The study further concludes that persons who have an insecure attachment style have challenges when it comes to making autonomous decisions and have a tendency to too rely on their peers. The study found that there is an inverse relationship between peer pressure and social ineptitude in the chosen township schools. The study revealed that many learners had a tendency to explain their circumstances to external factors, rather than accepting responsibility for their own acts.

6.5.4: How schools could be a secure base for learners with insecure attachment styles

This subsection shows the conclusions on how schools could be a secure base for township schools. The study concludes that a significant number of learners who have insecure attachments have not gotten adequate psychological and social support from their homes and schools to help them enhance their attachment and social competence. The study suggests that that schools should provide psychological support to learners through comprehensive positive reinforcement, positive psychology training, attentive learners care, and tailored learning opportunities. The study findings suggest that the best way to create a successful learning environment is by promoting learner motivation through positive reinforcement, such as praise, rather than exclusively concentrating on discovering flaws in the classroom. The findings indicated that utilizing positive reinforcement is necessary to successfully eradicate bad behaviour in learners and encourage them to gain knowledge from their peers. The study

showed that positive reinforcement can successfully correct anticipated behaviour in learners. It was discovered that this was already functioning effectively with learners who prioritize safety.

The study findings suggest that schools should promote a robust sense of self-esteem and assurance by incorporating positive psychology training. The findings indicate that engaging in positive psychology training can offer support to individuals during difficult moments of personal development and boost their self-confidence. The study determined that schools can successfully foster self-assurance and proficiency by being intentional and aware of their function.

The study findings suggested that teachers should provide assistance to all learners and create a secure and steady basis by actively involving and paying close attention to them. Studies have demonstrated that being responsive can accelerate the progress and social progression of learners. Furthermore, the study determined that professors ought to implement individualized instruction, in which learning is employed as a method to bolster learners' self-confidence. The study concludes that teachers should deliberately enhance learners' consciousness of their talents and also allow them to make mistakes. Studies suggested that individualized learning would significantly meet the psychological needs of learners and foster crucial competence traits, such as resilience and independence. Furthermore, research indicated that schools neglected to prioritize the promotion of mental health and the provision of counselling services to learners, which could greatly enhance their emotional and social growth.

Moreover, the findings suggest that social assistance should encompass efforts to combat poverty, promote social development, enhance personal growth, foster collaboration, and provide teacher training. The study findings suggest that initiatives aimed at alleviating poverty can make a substantial contribution towards fulfilling the basic requirements of all individuals. The findings indicated that feeding programs had a substantial effect on learners experiencing financial adversity. The study determined that the most widespread measures implemented in township schools to address poverty are the provision of essential necessities and additional assistance to cater to all learners.

A prevalent characteristic among the chosen township schools was a deficiency in excursions, athletics, and cultural events. According to the data, these social development programs have

not recommenced in township schools since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The study found that implementing social development initiatives can help learners achieve holistic development and improve their physical education, particularly in urban schools. The study findings indicated a necessity to introduce social activities in township schools. The findings of the qualitative study suggest that athletics can serve as an effective platform for fostering the development of life skills and character, hence promoting personal growth and favourably influencing individuals' educational experience. Schools are culpable for their lack of support towards sports and cultural activities, hence impeding the growth and progress of learners.
The study determined that there is a requirement for life development programs to offer learners with life skills that go beyond formal schooling, thereby improving their social competence. The qualitative findings indicated that introducing learners to potential work environments and real-life scenarios could have positive effects on their personal growth. Moreover, the findings of the study suggested that Life-Orientation, as an educational domain, may be intentionally employed as a discipline to promote change and function as a curriculum for individual development. Furthermore, the study findings highlighted a significant requirement for school counselling that includes highly skilled social workers to support learners' personal growth and progress. The study revealed a lack of dedicated social workers and counsellors in schools, which has a significant impact on the behaviour and problem-solving abilities of learners both at home and at school.

The study findings emphasized the crucial importance of cooperation in township school classrooms for the purpose of expanding information acquisition through peer interaction and fostering the development of social skills. The findings determined that teamwork has the ability to develop a cooperative learning atmosphere, in which all learners actively participate with others and gain advantages from their interactions. The findings revealed that teachers do not receive any type of professional development training or support in their schools, except for subject-specific training offered by district facilitators. The findings indicate that teacher training is necessary, especially in regards to comprehending the requirements of learners.

6.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the contributions made in the study by utilizing the findings.

This study aimed to enhance the existing knowledge and comprehension of attachment types and competence among learners in township schools within the Sedibeng West area. The study has led to the development of an intervention model that schools can implement to support learners with insecure attachment. The study has provided a 9-phase psychological and social support model specifically designed for high school learners in townships. The model is constructed based on the most noteworthy deductions derived from qualitative research on negative childhood and educational encounters. Given that no other study has employed a similar model, the creation of this model represents a distinctive and original contribution to the existing body of literature. The 9-phase psychological and social support model consists of development of regular positive reinforcement, development of positive psychology training, teacher training on learner responsiveness, development of personalized instruction, developing programs for basic needs support, social development initiatives, life development initiatives, development of collaborative networks with the community and continuous professional teacher development. The implementation of the 9-phase psychological and social support model would assist to address insecure attachment issues that arise among learners.

From the reviewed literature, very scanty information exists regarding attachment types and the social competence of learners specifically in township schools. Furthermore, the outcomes of this doctoral research have produced a noteworthy impact due to its extensive scope and use of an interpretivism research paradigm, which was very subjective and centered on the experiences of schools and learners regarding attachment types and social competence. The study produced findings about the factors in the home and school environments that impact the development of negative attachment patterns and social ineptitude in learners attending township schools. Furthermore, the existing literature on attachment styles had not yet explored the attachment types and the social competence of learners specifically in Sedibeng West township schools. The study allocated equal attention to social competence.

This study makes a substantial contribution to the existing research on attachment styles and social competence among learners in schools in the Sedibeng West district. Only a small number of researchers in the field of literature have developed a comprehensive approach that combines psychological, familial, social, biographical, and sociological factors. Many studies primarily concentrate on psychological aspects, and there is a lack of research on the social skills of learners in township schools and effective methods to help them overcome insecure

attachment patterns. Hence, the findings in this study elevates the significance of this work beyond previously published studies in the literature.

The findings from this study have led to expansion/extension of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory by demonstrating that learners in township schools actively contribute to their environment and consistently utilize cognitive structures to achieve their goals and develop holistically, despite facing numerous challenges. In addition to the systems that are presented in the Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, this study proposes the addition of cognitive functions which influence how an individual functions in an environment. Therefore, in addition to the 5 systems that are presented by Bronfenbrenner's theory, the study proposed that psychological factors, especially, cognitive functions be included at the center of the model. This discovery supports Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which posits that children engage with multiple settings during their adolescence, and these environments have a substantial impact on their behavior and social development. Consequently, the expansion of the idea would result in its subsequent advancement.

This study contributes by providing suggestions on psycho-social support to learners from insecure attachment patterns. Both attachment theory and Bronfenbrenner's theory Ecological systems theory elucidates the framework within which a child develops and the influences that shape human existence. Both theories demonstrate how varying environments can influence and shape the development of children within society. However, there is a lack of understanding regarding the psychological and social supportive mechanisms that schools can provide to help children from underprivileged township households and unstable family relationships. Hence, the psycho-social support is crucial in guaranteeing the success of all learners and minimizing the impact of their challenging situations. This study fills in this research gap by presenting a psycho-social support model that could be adopted by teachers to assist learners from insecure attachments and to help promote their developmental growth and social competence.

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

This section provides suggestions for township schools and other recommendations for educational practice. These recommendations are derived from the study findings and aim to establish how schools in Sedibeng West may become a secure base for learners.

Recommendations for practice

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following precise recommendations are made for implementation:

6.7.1 The 9-phase psycho-social support model

A key conclusion from this study is the creation of a paradigm for providing psychological and social support to all pupils in schools. The study suggests a paradigm for psychological and social support intervention that can help township schools in supporting learners who have insecure attachment styles. The psychological and social support intervention model can be outlined as follows:

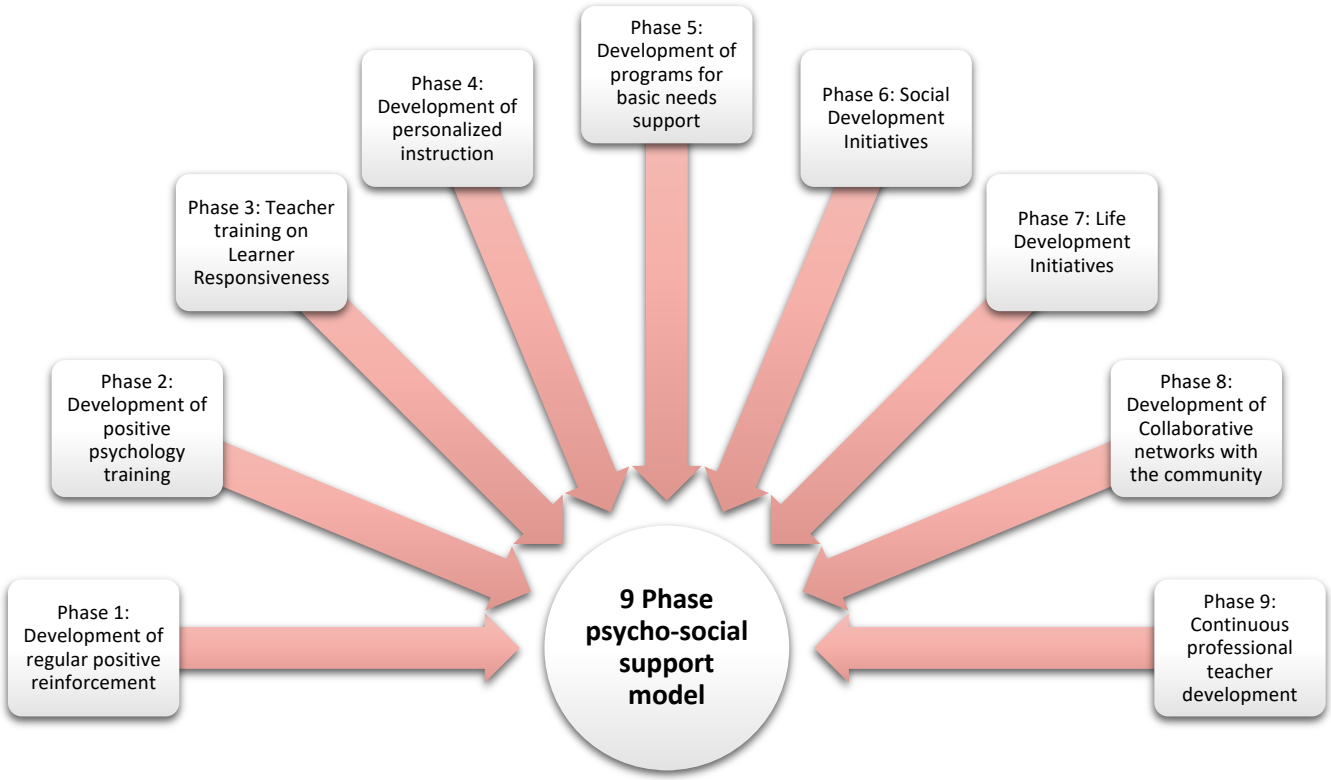


Figure 4: The 9 Phase psycho-social support model

The three selected schools were found to have deficiencies in the following psychological and social support components:

Phase 1: *Development of regular positive reinforcement*

The first stage of the model is the beginning of the process of establishing consistent positive reinforcement. At this stage, schools must establish a system of consistent positive reinforcement. Educators can make use of positive reinforcement in the classroom as a technique for efficiently eliminating negative behaviour in learners and motivating them to acquire knowledge from their classmates. Due to the fact that the majority of the learners who participated in the study were not familiar with positive reinforcement in their home environment, this is an extremely important aspect to consider. The utilization of positive reinforcement has the potential to successfully correct expected behaviour in learners. The use of positive reinforcement in classrooms should be implemented by teachers rather than the use of punishment in order to excite and encourage learners to participate in activities that are related to learning. In addition, it is of the utmost importance for school managers to provide teachers with training on the execution of approaches that involve positive reinforcement on a consistent basis. In addition to this, they should offer continuing assistance to teachers in order to aid them in meeting the requirements of individual leaners and cultivating an environment in the classroom that is loving and welcoming to all.

Phase 2: *Development of positive psychology training*

The second phase speaks to the development of positive psychological training in township schools. It is the responsibility of school leaders to educate and train teachers and parents, as well as provide them with aid and direction, regarding the value of secure attachment in order to improve the relationships and well-being of children. The purpose of this course is to provide parents with appropriate bonding strategies that can improve the growth and emotional security of children who are avoidant and dismissive, as well as address the bad experiences that these children have had throughout their lives. Through this training, parents should become more aware of the role they play and the contribution they make to the growth of their children.

Phase 3: *Teacher training on Learner Responsiveness*

Teachers need to be trained on the uniformity of learner responsiveness. This phase therefore, urges schools to equip teachers on the significance of responding well to learners' needs. This phase becomes essential because most learners do not encounter emotional receptiveness inside their household environment and therefore, school teachers should receive training on genuine care and concern for learners who have poor self-esteem by offering emotional support and validation. Learner responsiveness has the capacity to provide support and foster confidence and identity transformation. Teachers have the ability to teach learners how to recognize, express, and control their emotions, while also promoting a strong feeling of self-worth and responding well to them.

Phase 4: *Development of personalized instruction*

The development of personalized instruction suggests that educators should offer personalized learning assistance and create an environment that promotes learners' academic achievements. In addition, it would be beneficial for them to provide extracurricular alternatives to assist learners who encounter difficulties. Offering personalized instruction would inspire learners to investigate their passions and develop fresh skills. This would help foster a sense of purpose and importance, build a positive school culture and mindset. This is essential because learners exhibit individual differences, and certain individuals face greater disadvantages and challenges in the learning process.

Phase 5: *Development of programs for basic needs support*

Poverty is a significant factor that contributes to insecure attachment. The importance of this phase lies in the need for school managers to recognize, assess, and understand the needs of learners from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and provide customized support. schools should develop programs for basic needs support to address and reduce the stigma that is linked to poverty. Developing programs for basic needs support is essential because combating poverty might enhance learners' ability to focus. Schools are obligated to participate in fundraising initiatives and actively seek contributions from various businesses and groups. The department of basic education should provide necessary resources to disadvantaged schools and regularly sustain feeding programs in schools.

Phase 6: *Social Development Initiatives*

Social development initiatives are essential for any school. The phase strongly recommends that school management teams should revitalize social development programs in order to improve the educational experience for all learners, under the category of social support. According to research, schools have the capacity to participate in fundraising events and actively request donations from different businesses and organizations. As a result, this can provide opportunities for social engagement, which promotes the growth of communication and teamwork skills among learners. Lastly, social development efforts such as sports and culture have been found to have significant positive effects on learners' social development.

Phase 7: *Life Development Initiatives*

In this intervention model, life development programs can have a positive impact on schools in townships. Life development initiatives suggests that school leaders and teachers should implement suitable counselling programs to facilitate the early identification of learners with anxious attachment patterns, in order to provide the most effective therapies. Providing socio-emotional support helps protect learners from developing insecurities that may negatively impact their vision of the world and their attachment style. In order to create a favourable school environment, it is imperative for the department of education to hire more school counsellors and proficient social workers in every school to offer support to all learners.

Phase 8: *Development of collaborative networks with the community*

This phase suggests that school leaders and SGB's ought to develop collaborative networks with the community. Based on research, it was recommended that schools should use collaboration as a means to enhance social competence in learners. This phase then, could assist schools to build a positive relationship with the community where learners are coming from. This can be accomplished through a variety of evaluation tasks. Collaboration can facilitate schools and parents in supporting each other and regaining confidence to fulfil the vision and mission of the school. Communities can be of great benefit to schools in terms of support and also combating negative behaviours such as drugs and crime in the township. Moreover, schools

have the ability to facilitate social connection and promote collaboration, which in turn enhances community engagement and parental involvement.

Phase 9: *Continuous professional teacher development*

Lastly, the continuous professional teacher development cannot be overly emphasized in township schools. The study revealed a deficiency in teacher training to assist learners. The phase thus suggests that district authorities and school facilitators should provide more training and assistance for teacher development to all teachers and school leaders. Schools and teachers should get assistance and direction regarding the significance of secure attachment and social competence to effectively aid children and enhance their development. Continuous professional teacher development would also ensure teachers are proactive, welcoming, and engaging in the classroom, and that every learners receives attention and all the support they need.

6.7.2 Educators and learner councils should provide programs that foster a sense of purpose and importance, to help learners explore their interests and values

This study recommends that schools should develop a positive school culture and mindset. School leaders have the ability to engage learner councils in creating programs that cater to the needs and interests of high school learners, with the aim of fostering a safe and supportive environment while also encouraging independence and empowerment. This can establish an environment that promotes the academic achievements and development of all learners. The study also suggests that teachers and learners should work together to foster a culture of collaboration. From the findings, teachers and learners work in isolation thus struggle to create a conducive school culture.

6.7.3: Schools should train parents on best parenting programs and increase awareness in the community on secure homes

The study recommends that train parents on best parenting programs and increase awareness in the community on secure homes. This would provide parents with effective bonding techniques that may improve development and emotional security in avoidant-dismissive children and rectify their unpleasant experiences. This is because the study findings indicated that most

learners are from insecure attachment homes and this hampers their psychological development.

6.7.4: Educational institutions and community authorities should provide guidance and role models who demonstrate positive concepts and behaviour

The study recommends that school and community leaders could encourage learners by inviting guest lecturers and establishing mentorship programs. These programs should link learners with influential role models and compassionate individuals. This would serve as a catalyst to stimulate and ignite a sense of inspiration among learners, encouraging them to enhance their performance and refine their conduct. This is because the study findings indicated that learners in the township require positive role models, to enable them to develop appropriate behaviours.

6.7.5: Schools should develop teacher-led programs that can provide learners with the necessary abilities to proficiently address conflicts and navigate interpersonal interactions

The study recommends that schools should develop and implement teacher-led programs that can provide learners with the necessary abilities to proficiently address conflicts and navigate interpersonal interactions. This is essential because learners should enhance their ability to manage stress, develop strong interpersonal relationships, increase self-awareness, and improve their communication abilities. This is because the study findings revealed that life-orientation teachers possess the necessary abilities to assist learners in enhancing their social competence, as reported by the outcomes of the study.

6.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This part provided a more comprehensive analysis of the constraints and restrictions encountered during the course of the study. Any research of this nature would unavoidably encounter constraints. Below is a summary of the limitations observed during the data gathering for this qualitative study:

6.8.1: Challenges of scheduling interviews with deputy principals

Due to the nature of the deputy principal's responsibilities, it was challenging to schedule interviews with them. As a result, numerous appointments were cancelled and there were delays. Nevertheless, the researcher resolved this issue by demonstrating adaptability and accessibility throughout school holidays and weekends in order to gather data. Another constraint of this study was the fact that it dealt with a rare or new concept that is not commonly used in the township. As a result, the interviews had to be extended in order to explain the phenomenon and the requirements of the study.

6.8.2: Reluctance from life-orientation teachers

It is worth mentioning that several life-orientation teachers were sceptical about openly answering questions that they believed could potentially stigmatize learners. Despite the emphasis placed on the extent of the research's ramifications in the information letters, several teachers were unable to overcome their worries. Consequently, I had to modify the wording of the questions and avoid labelling learners. Instead, I emphasized the impacts and the problem statement of this study.

6.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

On the bases of the study's findings, conclusions, and limitations, the following areas are proposed for further research:

I. Disorganized attachment style in township schools and how schools can mitigate the consequences of violence.
II. Social skills of learners by incorporating parents and families from rural schools

III. A comparable study on insecure attachment styles that encompasses private schools and urban schools.
IV. Psychological and social support measures implemented in township schools.

6.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study examined attachment patterns and social competence among learners in three s chosen township schools in Sedibeng west. The study findings indicated that insecure

attachment styles are not fixed and can be modified through positive experiences. Moreover, social competence can be acquired with appropriate assistance and favorable circumstances. The study revealed that insecure attachment patterns and social incompetence are influenced by parental unresponsiveness, parental unavailability, and poverty. The study revealed that the insecure attachment patterns and social incompetence observed in the selected schools are greatly influenced by the absence of psychological and social support from caregivers and schools. The study established a direct cause-and-effect connection between attachment types and social skills. Regarding social ineptitude in township schools, the school, home, and community all have a significant impact on shaping a child's behavior. This is corroborated by Bronfenbrenner (1979) theoretical argument that children unavoidably get engaged and are impacted by multiple ecosystems that surround them. The many components of the ecological systems theory exert distinct impacts on each other. This study presents a 9-phase psycho-social support model that teachers could adopt to assist learners from insecure attachments.

It is also crucial to mention that township schools may confront numerous problems while trying to apply this model . These problems could be logistical, technological, educational or socio-economical. For example, some teachers may resist new teaching methods or technologies, making it challenging to implement training programs, or the capacity of training providers may be restricted, making it impossible to give high-quality training to all teachers. Again, the curriculum may not be flexible enough to accommodate new teaching methods or technologies. Lastly, training programs may not be customized to the specific cultural and contextual demands of township schools, however, overcoming these difficulties would require a holistic approach that engages stakeholders from multiple levels, including government, schools, and local communities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PERMISION LETTER TO SCHOOLS



University of the Witwatersrand,
Wits School of Education

August 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research at Esokwazi Secondary School/Jordan Secondary School/ Khutlo-Tharo Secondary School.

My name is Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu. I am studying for a PhD qualification in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am seeking permission to do research at your school on attachment styles and social competence and how schools can be a secure base for all learners. The study will explore forms of parent-child attachment affecting attachment styles among grade 10 learners in three Sedibeng West townships schools. I am interested to learn the possible factors that contribute to attachment patterns and social competence among learners in township schools.

The research will entail collecting data from one deputy principal, two Life-Orientation teachers and six learners in the 10th grade. I will invite individuals from your school to participate in this study. If they agree, they will be asked to be interviewed. The interviews comprise of precise open-ended questions and I will utilize an audiotape to conduct interviews, and the purpose of this action is to assist me to listen attentively during the interviews and have the aid of reference at a later stage when writing a report. The interviews for learners will be 30-35 minutes each., whilst the estimated time for interviews for teachers and deputy principals will be 35-45 minutes each. The data collection will take place on the premises and after work/school as per the pre-schedule and availability of participants. Participants will be asked to give their written consent before the research begins. The participant's responses will be treated confidentially, and their names and the name of the school will be anonymous. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study. The results will be communicated on a dissertation at the end of this study.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. The participants will not be paid for this study. There are low risks in participating in this study for learners who might be uncomfortable to speak about their family experiences. However, learners can stop the interview at any time. The interview schedule is attached for your perusal. All research data will be destroyed after 5 years after the study is completed.
I therefore, request permission in writing to conduct my research at your school. The permission letter should be on your school's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,
Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu
Cellphone: 0826188369
Email: 862810@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Peter Aloka
Tel: 011 717 3098 Email: Peter.aloka@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHER AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

Participant Information Sheet for Teachers and Deputy Principals

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu. I am a PhD student in the school of education, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Peter Aloka. I am conducting a research study about impacts of attachment styles. The study's title is attachment styles and social competence: how Sedibeng west township schools can be secure bases for all learners.
I am inviting you to take part in an interview on the given topic. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 35-45 minutes. The research activity will take place at your school at your preferred time and availability and if you permit, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a password protected laptop for 3 years and deleted after 5 years. Only I, will have access to the data.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or the name of the school. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on. If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study, neither will you not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life or some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time. This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website at the end of the end of the study. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.
If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu
Email: 862810@students.wits.ac.za

Phone number: 082 6188 369

Supervisor:
Dr.Peter Aloka
Email: peter.aloka@wits.ac.za
Phone number: 016 717 3098

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

Participant Information Sheet for Learners

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

August 2022

Dear Learners

My name is Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu. I am a PhD student in the school of education, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Peter Aloka. I am conducting a research study about attachment styles. The study's title is attachment and social competence: how Sedibeng west township schools can be secure bases for all learners.
Briefly, I am interested to find out how our home environments shape how we interact with ourselves and others, what leads to insecurities and how we can avoid them.
I am inviting you to take part in an interview on the given topic. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 30-45 minutes. The research activity will take place at your school at your preferred time and availability. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a password protected laptop for 3 years and deleted after 5 years. Only I, will have access to the data.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or the name of the school. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on. If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any school time, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything.
The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. Some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset and if this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time. This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website at the end of the study. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu
Email: 862810@students.wits.ac.za
Phone number: 082 6188 369

Supervisor:
Dr.Peter Aloka
Email: peter.aloka@wits.ac.za
Phone number: 016 717 3098

Participant Information Sheet for Parents

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

August 2022

Dear Parents

My name is Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu. I am a PhD student in the school of education, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Peter Aloka. I am conducting a research study about attachment styles. The study's title is attachment and social competence: how Sedibeng west township schools can be secure bases for all learners.
Briefly, I am interested to find out how home environments shape how children interact with themselves and others, what leads to insecurities and how we can avoid them.
I would like to invite your child to take part in an interview on the given topic. If you consent for your child to take part, their participation in this research study will last about 30-45 minutes. The research activity will take place at the school premises after school. I would also like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a password protected laptop for 3 years and deleted after 5 years. Only I, will have access to the data.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include their name or the name of the school. With your consent, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but the name and any personal information of your child will not be used or passed on. The participation in this study is voluntary. Your child can stop being in the study at any time. They do not have to answer any questions if they do not want to. They will not get any direct benefits if they choose to join the research study. Your child will not lose any school time, benefits or rights they would normally have if they decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost your child anything.
The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. Some of the questions asked may make your child feel sad or upset and, if this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time. This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website at the end of the study. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you. A consent form is attached for your signature.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Morefaith Naledi Mahlangu
Email: 862810@students.wits.ac.za

Phone number: 082 6188 369

Supervisor:
Dr.Peter Aloka
Email: peter.aloka@wits.ac.za
Phone number: 016 717 3098

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

PARENTS' CONSENT FORM

TITLE: ATTACHMENT AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE: HOW SEDIBENG WEST TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS CAN BE SECURE BASES FOR ALL LEARNERS

I_____ the parent of _____ agree for my child to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that my child can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my child's interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that my child's participation will remain anonymous (my child's name will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information provided in the interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but the name of my child and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher)
…… (date)

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE FOR LEARNERS

Attachment and social competence: How Sedibeng west township schools can be secure bases for all learners.

Section A: Biographical Information

1. Grade:
2. Gender:
3. Experience as a learner at the school (in years):
4. Age (in years):

Section B: Interview Questions

1. Attachment is one aspect of the relationship between you and your parent/guardian or caregiver that is involved with you being safe, secure and protected. How would you describe your situation?
2. In response to your situation regarding the kind of attachment that you have experienced, which factors contributed to your state? Explain your answer.
3. How would you describe your social competences in terms of how you relate with other learners, how you manage anger, socialize and manage issues such as anger? Explain your response.
4. In your school, how do existing teacher training programmes support secure attachment for learners? Explain this with respect to support from teachers and any other programmes in school for learners from fragile backgrounds. Explain.
5. What are some improvements that your school can do to make your learning experience better? Explain
6. How would you describe your family relationship?
7. When do you feel competent and what are some of your strengths? Please discuss
8. How would you describe your social skills in terms of how you relate with other learners, how you manage anger and socialize? Explain your response
9. When do you feel cared for? Explain

`Thank you for taking part in this Interview.

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

Attachment and social competence: How Sedibeng west township schools can be secure bases for all learners.

Section A: Biographical Information

Attachment theory and social competence: How Sedibeng west township schools can be secure base for all learners.

1. Subject Specialism:
2. Experience as a teacher (in years):
3. Teaching qualifications:
4. Gender:___
5.Age:___

Section B: Interview Questions

1. What are attachments styles possessed by grade 10 learners in your school? Explain your response.
2. Which home based factors contribute to secure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in township schools? Explain your response.
3. Which community based factors contribute to insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in township schools? Explain your response.
4. In your perspective, how do you view the social competences of grade 10 learners from insecure parent-child in your school? Explain your response.
5. By looking at your school, are there existing teacher training programmes that support secure attachment in schools? If yes, which ones?

`Thank you for taking part in this Interview.

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEWS SCHEDULE FOR DEPUTY PRINCIPALS

Section A: Biographical Information

1. Subject Specialism:
2. Experience as a Deputy Principal (in years):
3. Teaching qualifications:
4. Gender:___
5.Age:___

Section B: Interview Questions

1. Which forms of parent-child attachments possessed by grade 10 learners in your school? Explain your response.
2. Which home based factors contribute to insecure attachment styles among grade 10 learners in township schools? Explain your response.
3. Which community based factors contribute to insecure attachment styles among grade 8 learners in township schools? Explain your response.
4. In your perspective, how do you view the social competences of grade 10 learners from poor parent-child attachments in your school? Explain your response.
5. By looking at your school, are there existing teacher training programmes that support secure attachment in schools? If yes, which ones? Explain
6. What role could the school, as a system, play other than, or in addition to, presenting standard curricular programmes to support the resilience of learners?
7. What skills could be the role of the teachers and school management team impact on the learners' attachment and social competence?
8. Which mechanisms could teachers utilize to make schools a secure base for learners from insecure attachment backgrounds?

`Thank you for taking part in this Interview.

APPENDIX I: GDE APPROVAL LETTER

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**14 June 2022**
Validity of Research Approval:	**08 February 2022– 30 September 2022** **2022/252**
Name of Researcher:	**Mahlangu MN**
Address of Researcher:	**472 Zone 6**
	Sebokeng
	Vereeniging
Telephone Number:	**082 618 8369**
Email address:	**862810@students.wits.ac.za**
Research Topic:	**Attachement &social competence : How Sedibeng West Township Schools can be secure bases for insecure learners**
Type of qualification	**PhD**
Number and type of schools:	**3 Secondary Schools**
District/s/HO	**Sedibeng West**

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

14/06/2022

1

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
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APPENDIX J: RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Mahlangu

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H22/07/18**
PROJECT TITLE	Attachment and social competence: How Sedibeng West township schools can be secure bases for all learners
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Ms M Mahlangu
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Wits School of Education/
DATE CONSIDERED	22 July 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Medium
EXPIRY DATE	19 January 2026

DATE 20 January 2023 **CHAIRPERSON** (Professor J Watermeyer)

cc: Supervisor : Dr P Aloka

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **A SIGNED COPY** returned to the Secretary electronically. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I/we agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low Risk studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

Signature

28 / 01 / 2023
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX K: TEACHERS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS' CONSENT FORM

TEACHERS AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS' CONSENT FORM

TITLE: ATTACHMENT AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE: HOW SEDIBENG WEST TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS CAN BE SECURE BASES FOR ALL LEARNERS

I,_____ agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher)
…… (date)

APPENDIX L: LEARNERS' ASSENT FORM



LEARNERS' ASSENT FORM

TITLE: ATTACHMENT AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE: HOW SEDIBENG WEST TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS CAN BE SECURE BASES FOR ALL LEARNERS

I,_____ agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher)
…… (date)

APPENDIX N: PARENTS' CONSENT FORM



PARENTS' CONSENT FORM

TITLE: ATTACHMENT AND SOCIAL COMPETENCE: HOW SEDIBENG WEST TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS CAN BE SECURE BASES FOR ALL LEARNERS

I_____ the parent of _____
agree for my child to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that my child can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my child's interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that my child's participation will remain anonymous (my child's name will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information provided in the interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but the name of my child and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher)
…… (date)