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'I am nothing just zero' : exploring the experiences of black unemployed teachers in a South African rural community.

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

> *A young man having just received his degree from university rushed out saying, "Here I am world; I have a BA degree." The world replied: Sit down, son, and I will teach you the rest of the alphabet (Barker 1999:214)*

Unemployment has emerged as a topical issue in most parts of the world and it has grave consequences for any country. Different scholars from different parts of the world have studied unemployment, looking at it in various population groups and from different perspectives. From a global perspective, unemployment has showed detrimental results for individuals and it can also cause uncertainty, fear of the future and loss of confidence. Unemployment is also one of the direct contributing factors to most countries' labour market and poverty. Mchunu (2003:1) argues that unemployment exists in every society, regardless of social status, background, beliefs and class.

Surprisingly, many parts of the world also encounter high rates of graduate unemployment. High rates of unemployment are illustrated in the industrial areas of Western Europe and the United States where the problem of graduate unemployment grows more serious year by year (Griffiths and Jones, 1980:286). In China, the most populous country in the world, most graduates are faced with a tight job market. The number of job-hunting graduates for 2006 was a staggering 5 million (Beijing Review, 2006:1). Unexpectedly, Finland is another country that experienced high rates of graduate unemployment, in particular unemployed nurses.

South Africa has not been spared by this global problem. Studies show that South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. The South African Reserve Bank has stated that unemployment is rising by one or two points each year. Predictably, many of South Africa's unemployment troubles started during the apartheid era when the majority of the country's black population was marginalized. This history has played a major role in South Africa's current economic situation, which is characterized by high

levels of inflation and very high levels of unemployment, both of which have persisted for several years. Against this background, it is clear that black unemployment remains a significant phenomenon in South Africa.

A number of local studies have indicated several disparities in unemployment figures, with a higher rate for black South Africans as compared to whites and other races (Diamond *et al,* 2003). These studies also indicate that this legacy of increasing black unemployment has been occasioned by racial and cultural differences between the black population and the whites.

Graduate unemployment is still rife, especially amongst the black population. Results of a Human Science Research Council (HSRC) report (2006:15) showed that black South Africans had the highest percentage of unemployed graduates. The question remains as to how many black teachers in particular are unemployed and whether their experiences as black people have been investigated.

1.1. RATIONALE

It has been noted above that unemployment is a worldwide problem. In the field of psychology, unemployment has also been addressed extensively, with some scholars engaging this subject from school leavers, less-educated people and the retrenched (Waters, 2002, Hayes & Nutman, 1981, Kelvin & Jarrett, 1985). Other studies have concentrated on the assessment of the economic dimension of the problem (Moller, 1988).

Nonetheless, a preliminary investigation indicated that professionals and the highly educated were an under-researched group. Yet, these categories, as the research shows, experience severe psychological problems as a result of unemployment. Paledi (2000) is one of the few scholars in South Africa who investigated the relationship between unemployment and the psychological well-being of graduates. Paledi's study, however, was more generic in nature, focusing on all population groups in South Africa, but none

to my knowledge, have explored the experiences of black unemployed qualified teachers in South Africa in particular.

As a result, the focus of this research is to explore the effects of unemployment on the psychological lives of black unemployed qualified teachers in South Africa. It is generally assumed in South Africa, where education is highly valued, that unemployment will be less acute for graduates. However, the search for employment by people with higher education, such as black qualified teachers who have high expectations and aspirations, often involves a lack of success that may be very psychologically damaging.

The motivation for this study also arose from my life experience and day-to-day informal interaction with unemployed teachers in my community. Many of these teachers have been in this situation since the inception of the democratic order in 1994. In my informal exchange with these teachers, several issues were noted. They indicated that they feel pressurized by the community in the sense that community members expect them not only to get jobs but also to get better jobs than other people. This expectation affected them negatively. They said that they feel 'small' and isolated in many ways. For example, unemployment also reduces their interests in attending the graduation ceremonies of new teachers and being in the company of employed teachers.

On the academic level, research done by Badat (1985) stated that education provides the means of entry into occupation and that access to education is part of the process of equalizing the social mobility of individuals from a lower to a higher social status. He also indicated that education remains the most effective weapon against unemployment. This may be one of the reasons that black people in South Africa value education highly, believing that it is important for them to become educated and hoping that if they do, they will not only get better jobs but also achieve higher status in their communities. However, it seems that this is not always the case. Despite the education they have received, many black teachers remain unemployed.

This study is important because the positions that people hold in society and the jobs they perform play an important role in how they see themselves and they are perceived by others. When one looks at the effect of unemployment, it is clear that there are elements within work, besides material benefits, which compel people to work. Jahoda (1982:45) believes that it is possible to explore the psychological meaning of this situation by making explicit what is implicit in employment, by distinguishing latent from manifest functions of employment. Jahoda (1982) further highlights that it is the latent consequences of work which help one to understand why work is psychologically supportive, and by the same token, why unemployment is psychologically destructive.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study is to explore the psychological experiences of black unemployed teachers in South Africa. The aims of this study focus on the experience of the black unemployed teachers in South Africa about being both educated and unemployed, exploring how they experienced their relationship with their families and close friends, how community members perceived them and the strategies they used to cope with unemployment. In order to achieve these aims, the following questions will be explored:

- What are the perceptions of black unemployed qualified teachers about being unemployed?
- How do black unemployed teachers experience their relationships with their families and close friends?
- What appears to be the perceptions of the community or society about black unemployed teachers and how do unemployed teachers respond to these perceptions?
- What coping strategies do black unemployed teachers use to deal with unemployment?

1.3. CHAPTER OUTLINE

This study consists of five chapters.

Chapter One presents the background, rationale, aim and objectives of the study.

Chapter Two provides a literature review dealing with approaches to unemployment, the effects of unemployment, and the coping strategies used by the unemployed.

Chapter Three presents the methodology. It covers the research design, sampling, interview process and the procedure that was followed in the collection and analysis of data.

Chapter Four is the presentation and discussion of findings. The findings are divided into six categories. The first three categories highlight the reasons that motivated participants to choose teaching as a career, the difficulties they encountered while studying and the practical aspects of being unemployed. The last three categories which are the psychological aspects of unemployment, social aspects of unemployment and the participant's coping strategies form the core part of the study.

Chapter Five provides the summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Having outlined the problem and rationale for this study in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on how unemployment is conceptualised. According to Barker (1999:163), unemployment is probably the most severe problem South African society is experiencing and it is conceivably the root cause of many other problems such as crime, violence and HIV/AIDS. Mmusi (2003:2) defined unemployment "as a state of worklessness, experienced by people who are seen as potential members of the workforce". Within this understanding, it is apparent that the unemployed can be considered to be people who are available for, but are unable to secure work. Such includes qualified teachers with either teaching degrees or diplomas from various institutions such as universities, technikons and colleges who have never been employed.

2.1. UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

Statistics South Africa's research findings have indicated that in South Africa, unemployment is extremely high and rising. The majority of South Africans find themselves in direct poverty due to unemployment (Kingdom and Knight, 2001:7). Whittle (1990:7) argues that all four South African population groups, blacks, whites, coloureds and Indians identified unemployment as the most serious problem in South Africa. What is more, unemployment is reported to be far higher among black people than other race groups (Barker, 1999:165). Barker also highlighted that unemployment by province reflected that the Eastern Cape and Limpopo Province experienced the highest levels of unemployment. More than half of all unemployed people are younger than 30 years of age and they have not worked before. Such persons, therefore, have no sources of financial support other than their families (Barker, 1999:177).

Kingdom and Knight (2001:5) mention that South Africa also suffers a high unemployment rate amongst people with higher education. Many people in South Africa believe that education provides a basis for employment. This belief has encouraged many people to be educated with the aim that they will get better jobs. However, Diamond *et al*

(2003) argue that education is sometimes 'accused' of raising the aspirations of people with regard to work beyond the capacity of our economies to meet them. This view corresponds with Nzimande (1995) whose report shows that even educated people like teachers find it hard to get employment. Nzimande (1995:1) says:

> One of the legacies of apartheid education has been overconcentration of teacher training. This led to the production of teachers in subjects like African languages, Biblical studies and history. This has contradicted the law of supply and demand and has led to a situation of severe teacher unemployment

The Human Science Research Council's (2006:15) report concerning unemployment amongst graduates reveals similar tendencies. It shows that the majority of African graduates who experienced unemployment are in the humanities, education and arts fields (HSRC, 2006: 15). It further shows that the highest percentage of graduates who experienced periods of unemployment are blacks with 79% compared to 3.1% for Asians graduates, 6, 2% for coloured graduates and 11, 8% for white graduates. The research findings of the HSRC also state that graduates who experienced periods of unemployment use multiple methods in their search for employment, the most common being responding to advertised vacancies. Some also take initiative by approaching firms where they thought they could work (HSRC, 2006: 18).

Barker (1999:178) argues that people with higher education qualifications become frustrated more easily if they do not find a job. His point of view is supported by Fineman (1983: 6) who found out that people higher up the educational ladder are particularly prone to negative reactions such as confusion, frustration, disorientation and hopelessness when unemployed because of the strong personal investment they made in education when trying to build their careers.

2.2. EXPERIENCES OF UNEMPLOYMENT

According to Mmusi (2003:2), unemployment is a very challenging condition and the problems that arise from it are numerous, touching on every aspect of life for those who are its victims.

Parkers (1971) in Hayes and Nutman (1981) and Fagin and Little (1984) focus on the psycho-social aspects of unemployment in which they describe the various stages or phases which individuals go through after becoming unemployed. The last stage which is "resignation and adjustment" is relevant to this research as most of the participants in this study were unemployed for more than four years and some of them might be experiencing the same symptoms as the ones outlined in the resignation and adjustment stage. In this stage, Fagin and Little (1984:35) mention that the unemployed people often adopt a new way of life with different standards and expectations. Job-seeking is not done regularly, but in a haphazard, casual and half-hearted way, without any real hope of change. The greater part of the day is spent sleeping. Time drags slowly by, and the day seems to be long and empty. There is a tendency to withdraw from social life. Television often becomes the main source of interest and distraction, and there is no discrimination as to which programmes are watched (1984:35).

2.2.1. The impact of unemployment on self- esteem.

The results of research on the effect of unemployment on self-esteem seem to be consistent and unambiguous. According to Leino-Loison (2004:415), unemployment has negative effects on a person's self-esteem. A review of the literature also supports the claims that unemployment leads to low self –esteem. Feather's (1982) study shows that people who spent time out of the labour force show lower level of self-esteem. Self esteem is defined by Muller (1993:35) as "judgments of worthiness that are expressed by the attitudes that one holds towards the self, which strengthen expectations of success and personal strength". Goldsmith *et al* (1997:3) describe self-esteem from two points of view. Goldsmith et al (1997) perceive self-esteem as an unstable cognition easily changed by social circumstances through processes such as evaluation by others, social comparisons with others and traumatic life events. The other perspective envisions self-esteem as a relatively durable feature of personality that resists change. However, the latter view acknowledges that self-esteem may be altered by major life changes or traumatic events. Unemployment could constitute such a traumatic event (Goldsmith *et al*, 1997:3). Paledi (2000:9) argues that the relationships between unemployment and self -esteem are likely to be complex and to be influenced by a range of mediating factors

such as other aspects of the individual's personality, belief system and length of unemployment

Social psychologists such as Erickson and Seligman as cited in (Jahoda 1982:61) report that exposure to events such as joblessness is capable of impairing an individual's psychological well-being. Their research suggests that as a person's psychological health deteriorates, there is a corresponding decline in cognitive performance, motivation and perception of self-worth. Jahoda (1982) further asserts that even unsatisfactory employment is preferable to the absence of work.

Johnson (2002:4) maintains that most people describe themselves according to their job titles. They describe themselves, for example, as lawyers, directors, nurses, teachers and doctors. Social evaluations by others and social comparisons are particularly influential in this process and, therefore, it is reasonable to expect a reduction in self -esteem when one is unemployed (Gergen, 1978, cited in Shamir, 1986:89) Findings of research done by Goldsmith *et al* (1997:3) involving 98 university graduates, reveal that unemployed graduates had lower self-esteem and were less organised and less purposeful in their use of time. Paledi (2000:26) mentioned that the effort of job seeking often involves the experience of rejection and failure, which may further harm the graduate's self- esteem.

Glyptis (1989:78) too argues that unemployment may cause low self -esteem, while in other cases people have had low self-esteem before becoming unemployed. Glyptis (1989) further points out that some people's low self -esteem might be attributable to unemployment, though not in all cases and for some, it is related to a general lack of self-confidence and low morale. In view of this, Glyptis (1989:78) warns against generalizing that unemployment causes low-self esteem. Tiggemann and Wingfield (1980:79) studied the link between unemployment and low self-esteem among students. Their results reveal that many of these students showed traits such as bored, angry, less happy and more depressed while they were still at school. Their self esteem therefore, is likely to have been a predisposing factor rather than a consequence of unemployment.

2.2.2. The impact of unemployment on present life satisfaction

According to Paledi (2000:10), present life satisfaction can be defined as the degree to which a person reports satisfaction with salient features of his or her life at that moment. As might be expected, many studies showed that unemployment has negative effects on the life satisfaction of people especially with regard to prolonged unemployment (Claussen et. al; 1993, Graetz, 1993). Leino-Loison (2004:419) indicates that long-term unemployment decreases the ability to enjoy life. Paledi (2000:10) is of the same opinion;

> The unemployed report diminished life satisfaction because they are denied the financial, rewards and higher standards of living that come with employment, and are excluded from an important role that is assumed to be a normal part of a person's experience in a setting that offers the possibility of satisfying some basic human needs.

According to Brenner and Bartell (1983:109), the length of unemployment has direct negative effects on psychological functioning, which in turn affects one's life more broadly. Rowely (1987:13) reports that self -esteem tended to decrease with increase in length of unemployment. However, it is important to realize that this does not necessarily mean that the length of unemployment causes low self- esteem. These results only show that there is an association between the two variables (Paledi 2000:14). Rowley's (1987:132) research indicates that negative consequences of unemployment tend to occur within the first three months of unemployment and thereafter, remain relatively stable.

2.2.3. The impact of unemployment in relation to gender

Studies dealing with the role of gender indicate variation in regard to the questions of unemployment. Previous research on gender has suggested that gender differences may occur in the way men and women react to work and unemployment (Paledi, 2000, Gurney, 1980, Feather, 1982). Research investigating gender differences has revealed that unemployment is not as central a part of the women's identity as it is for men. In their opinion, this view might be closely related to the fact that married women regard employment as being of less importance to their sense of identity than men because they gain a sense of identity from their husbands' occupation. However, according to

McFadyen (1995:21), masculinity is often linked with having a job. They also argue that when a man becomes unemployed, his masculinity identity as a breadwinner is threatened and his status as a worker and provider for the household is taken away from him. If this happens, then the source of many of his privileges is also threatened and his position may be challenged by other family members (McFadyen, 1995: 21).

Muller and Winocur (1993) found that in West Germany, men talked less easily than women about their unemployment, suggesting that men find the stigma of unemployment more threatening than women. Haralambos (1990:387) contends that women often suffer less from unemployment because domestic life offers them a sense of identity and purpose. These findings are congruent to Winefield, (1991) who found out that unemployment results in lower levels of self-esteem in men than in women. Similarly, Lahelma's (1992:94) study that focused on an adult group reports that unemployment has a stronger adverse impact on the psychological well-being of men as compared to the women. Paledi (2003:11) argues that usually around the late 30s, men are married and have family responsibilities as breadwinners; this means that if they are unemployed, their responsibilities are mostly not met and this is particularly detrimental to their self-esteem.

Feather, (1982) emphasizes the need to take into account possible gender differences in reaction to unemployment in light of changing gender roles. However, this does not imply that women are not breadwinners. Women are increasingly emerging as heads of households, either as single mothers or as widows. The family institution is also being re-defined and the traditional set-up of husband, wife and kids is not necessarily the norm. In other studies, no gender differences were found in self-esteem, general distress and life satisfaction between unemployment males and females (Jackson, Stanford and Banks, 1983, Shamir, 1986).

2.2.4. The impact of unemployment on social systems/networks

(a) Family

The effects of unemployment on the family have been studied in numerous research projects within various disciplines. It has been found that unemployment has a multitude of negative and detrimental effects and signs of distress were often displayed by the entire family (Fagin, 1980 and Moynagh, 1985). It is, therefore, important to note that unemployment cannot be easily and adequately understood without looking at the social context of the family because the family is often regarded as the basic unit of the social system.

According to Mmusi (2003:14), unemployment is experienced as threatening because it produces substantial structural disorganization in the family systems and it brings change in the family‘s daily life. However, the amount of change and distress that unemployment causes is also dependant on the particular family. It will also depend on the relationships established or existing within the family before unemployment occurs (Mmusi, 2003:14). This corresponds with Fagin’s (1980:59) argument that, depending on the unemployed person’s basic standing with his or her family, unemployment rarely transforms relationships; however, it rather polarizes prior patterns towards greater supportiveness or precipitates collapse.

(b) Friendships and social life

The effects of unemployment on family members have been explored in the earlier section. This section will look at the effects of unemployment on friendships and social life. Hayes and Nutman, (1981), mention that when one is unemployed, the likelihood of losing friends is very high. Mchunu (2003:170) argues that the basis of this isolation is more than the simple question of the ability to socialize because one has no money to do so. Unemployed people often feel the stigma of being unemployed and the feeling of not having something to say during discussions that are related to employment leads to their isolation (Fryer *et al* 1987:102). Many unemployed people also tend to avoid social

gatherings because they avoid the embarrassment of having to answer questions related to employment (Fryer *et al* 1987:102).

Some studies suggest that unemployed people see themselves as different to the employed workers and their social life also changes. The most striking evidence comes from local research done by Moller on a total of 1300 unemployed people in Soweto, Mdantsane (East London) and the greater Durban area. The findings of Moller's study indicate that the majority of unemployed people reported feelings of loneliness, 46% felt that people avoided them and 55% believed that employed people did not care about them. 80 percent said that people who lose their jobs often lose their friends.

According to the respondents in Moller's study, "friends are people that you always share what you have with them. Thus, if you are unemployed you have nothing to share, then they walk away from you." One of the participants in Moller's study illustrated this point by saying:

> The day I lost my job was the day I lost my friends, if you keep asking your friends for cigarettes, beer and bus fares, they get fed up and decide to keep away from you until you get a job. You become 'a menace' to your friends asking them for this and that, and finally you go without friends.

The respondents in Moller's study shared the view that unemployed people cannot expect to get as much love from their friends as they did when they were working.

(c) Society or Community

Du Bois and Miley (1996:317) point out that unemployment brings a number of challenges, not only for individuals, families and friends, but communities get affected too. Haralambos (1990:539) argues that unemployment devalues the standard or quality of the life in society as a whole. He says that those remaining at work feel less secure and may have their standard of living threatened and that division between the employed and unemployed is likely to grow and unemployment reduces social contacts.

Haralambos (1990:539) mentions that one of the defining effects of unemployment is a feeling among unemployed people that they are treated as second class citizens. He also states that unemployed people are often socially isolated, stigmatized and marginalized. According to Fagin (1980), Lea and Young (1984), this sense of stigma is often based on the way they feel they are being handled by various agencies and groups in society.

Nurnberger (1990) mentions that unemployment is seen as one of the contributions to violence and unrest, particularly in black township areas in South Africa. Nurnberger also indicates that employed people in the townships are well respected and viewed as important people who contribute to the welfare of the community unlike unemployed people. Jahoda (1982:15) argues that the social experiences of the unemployed become limited, more especially when one is among people who are employed. He further mentions that unemployed people often experience shame and self-doubt that leads them to withdraw from society and thus, experience loss of status and identity (1982:15). Paledi (2000:13) argues that society often perceives unemployed people as being lazy and irresponsible.

Nevertheless, Mchunu (2003:26) claims that the feeling of being unemployed and the sense of isolation differ where almost the entire community is unemployed. Where all the neighbours are in the same situation, there is no stigma attached to unemployed people, no judgmental attitude and labelling. This differs from the situation where only few people in the community are unemployed.

2.3. UNEMPLOYMENT AND TEACHING

Teaching is usually described as a vocation. The word ‘vocation’ comes from a Latin word meaning ‘to call’. It refers to the feeling that one is called to a particular occupation by something in or beyond oneself in order to serve others (Adendorff, *et al*, 2002:18). Vocations are defined by Duke (1984) as ‘helping professions’, such as teaching, nursing, and preaching to name but a few. These professions are largely pursued due to their high levels of intrinsic reward which is often valued above the remuneration for the work.

According to (Lindren, 1980; Furnham & Argyle, 1998), work that offers internal reward is often associated with low monetary reward and is typically known as vocational work. Furnham & Argyle (1998) state that although the pay is relatively low, vocational work is usually accorded a relatively high social status. Hayward (2002:12) highlights that the primary motivating factor for those who undertake to do vocational work would be related to the intrinsic rewards provided by that work, as opposed to a concern with considerable financial gain.

Duke (1984:34) indicates that teaching is considered to be a vocation for people who gain a sense of satisfaction through working with children and, thereby, play an important role in the development of society. Similarly, Price (1964:19) reveals that many people get enjoyment from passing on knowledge to others, and teaching offers them this opportunity. Against this background, some teachers believe that they are 'called' to teaching because they enjoy the satisfaction of helping learning minds grow; of knowing that they are doing something that is essential for the development and continuation of society (Duke, 1984). These kinds of people often have difficulties when trying to quantify the materialistic rewards related to teaching, but experience an abundance of intrinsic rewards.

Estola *et al,* (2003: 240) support the above perspective by indicating that many teachers describe their work as a vocation. Two of the teachers in Estola *et al's* study said that teaching was a vocation to them. One of the two teachers in Estola *et al's* research described teaching as a 'job assigned to her'. It is interesting to note that the narratives of these teachers revealed that teaching is seen as allowing one to contribute to society; satisfying the desire to serve others and to help children to build their future. Estola *et al*'s study also highlights the fact that teaching as a vocation does not only imply an inborn ability to accomplish a specific task and is not something self-evident. Rather, one grows into and develops a sense of vocation, often through highly strenuous and contradictory life experiences (Estola *et al* 2003: 246). Against this background, one can say that the experience of being in a vocation can be made even more painful if people do not get employment in the area of their vocation.

Professor Kader Asmal, MP, the former South African Minister of Education, in his speech at the 13th National Council Meeting of National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) on the 24th of October 2000 said that "teachers are a vital part of the future of our country and in the communities we serve, you are all aware that teachers should play a central role in the communities in which they are located". Kader Asmal's speech indicates that teaching is much more than just a way of earning a living, it is also important and worthwhile in itself. Asmal's statement on the importance of teachers in community development is congruent with Ryan and Cooper's (1992:155) argument that "teaching, like nursing, the ministry and social work is a service occupation, built into teaching is the idea of contributing to the lives of others." Different people have different career ambitions; motivation also has an important role to play when choosing a profession**.** As Hayward (2002) argues, some of the reasons people chose to become teachers are the desire to teach and/or the desire to teach a particular subject, the belief that teaching is worthy and a willingness to serve others. Krecic and Grmek (2005) also mention different reasons for choosing teaching. These reasons include self-realization reasons which are based on the desire for personal and professional growth, altruistic reasons in which motivation is based upon talent and personal interest. Material reasons arise from aspirations or stereotypes, for example, teaching is a suitable profession for woman (Krecic and Grmek 2005:270).

2.4. COPING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

In the view of Mchunu's (2003:1), unemployment is a serious problem which can cause irretrievable losses and shatter social and psychological functioning of individuals. Coping strategies are, therefore, important during unemployment period. Research conducted by Canadian Mental Health Association (1993:2) revealed that an unemployed person can use some of the following strategies; establishing a daily schedule including a regular time for job search activities, reading research books or taking workshops on stress management techniques, contacting local employment centre or employment counselling for information on programmes which are in the community and keeping oneself busy or staying active outside home. Mchunu's (2003:31) says that participating

in community structures such as growing crops, sewing and voluntarily offering services to the community can help the unemployed to cope with the stress of being unemployed.

Jackson and Walsh (1983:15) focus on the way in which families cope with unemployment within a broad life-course perspective. Their results show that interdependence of individuals within a family is a strong coping strategy for unemployment. Similarly, the findings of a study conducted by Leino-Loison (2004:420) reveal that many unemployed nurses felt that they were being unfairly treated, but those with positive family support felt that there was meaning and purpose in their lives and were certain that they could keep things under control. Fryer and Payne (1984:288) conducted an in-depth study of 11 unemployed people who were believed to be managing the experiences of unemployment well. The findings showed that many people in this sample were offering services voluntarily to the community based organization.

Patton and Donohue (1998:332), in their study on coping with long-term unemployment, challenge the dominant deprivation hypothesis relating to the negative experience of unemployment, and in its place, they offer a theory of personal agency. The personal agency theory, as defined by Patton and Donohue, asserts that people are self-determined and pro-active agents who strive to interpret, initiate, change and cope with events which are congruent with their personal value. According to Patton and Donohue (1998), the extent of social support, integration into affiliation networks and access to an intimate and confidant relationship reduces the impact of unemployment on financial life. In addition, Patton and Donohue (1998:333) argue that the "ability to avoid intrusive thoughts and feelings of self-denigration were found to be significant variables in reducing the anxiety and depression associated with unemployment."

According to the coping model of Folkman and Lazarus (1980, 1985) cited in McFadyen (1995:2), individuals who suffer distress will engage in “primary appraisal, with an assessment of what is at stake”. Primary appraisal as explained by Folkman and Lazarus involves the “individual‘s ability to evaluate his or her own self-perceptions and feelings of self-worth.” Therefore, the concept of primary appraisal can be used to understand the

reactions of unemployed individuals to others, and also their own self- perceptions. Folkman and Lazarus further explain that after individuals have engaged in primary appraisal, they move to another process which is called secondary appraisal. In the secondary appraisal, individuals assess their own resources for coping.

Folkman and Lazarus (1985) mention two types of coping resources which are; emotional-focused coping and problem-focused coping. The emotional-focused coping resources as outlined by Folkman and Lazarus (1985) involve focusing upon the self and are related to wishful thinking, distancing, self-blame, tension-reduction and self-isolation. On the other hand, problem-focused coping involves doing something to change for the better, the problem causing the distress for example, searching for a job, looking for a retraining program and information seeking. Consequently, the notion of secondary appraisal and the concepts of emotional and problem focused coping strategies provide a useful framework for understanding how unemployed people can cope with stigma and lowered self-worth.

2.5. SUMMARY

Unemployment and its effects have been looked at and discussed by different scholars. From this literature review, it can be concluded that unemployment is a very complex and challenging situation which brings many changes in the individual's total functioning. Unemployment also leads to a number of challenges in families and communities. People who are unemployed experience multiple losses and its direct and indirect consequences include family conflict, social isolation, stigma and stress related illness. In South Africa, the high rate of unemployment, especially among black people, seems to be one of the pressing issues, leaving many of the South Africa population in direct poverty. As a result, black people in South Africa highly value education and they believe that it is important for them to become educated hoping that if they are educated, they will not only get better jobs but also achieve higher status in their communities. However, it seems that this is not always the case; many black graduates remain unemployed, despite their education.

Research has shown that unemployment reduces a person's self-esteem. Lower levels of self-esteem were evident among unemployed men in particular. This might be due to the fact that men view themselves as providers and heads of their families and when they are unable to provide for the family their status is threatened. Review of literature also showed that unemployment decreases one's ability to enjoy life. These might be due to the fact that the unemployed have no access to financial rewards that often come with employment. It is also found that unemployed people often lose friends during the unemployment period. The unemployed also experience discrimination, stigma and social isolation from other members of the community and these make them feel inferior.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research design and methodology of the study. It highlights the process the researcher went through in the designing, compiling and documenting of the study.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

In an attempt to meet the aim of the study, the researcher adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), researchers adopting a qualitative approach are more concerned with understanding individual's perceptions of the world. According to Nkoe (2002), Mouton and Marais (1992), Vockel and Asher (1995), qualitative research takes the form of an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon in which a researcher collects and interprets the data and reports the findings in a descriptive manner. Nkoe (2002:45) argues that qualitative research focuses on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being investigated. He further mentions that a valuable aspect of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to develop an understanding of behaviours in social groups and can apply to many naturally occurring events (Nkoe 2002:45).

As Denzin and Lincoln (1998:3) assert, a qualitative approach has the potential to describe, make sense of, interpret or reconstruct social interaction in terms of the meanings the participants attach to it. Schurinck (1998, 242) adds that "qualitative methodology also involves a process of interaction", which, in this study, took place between the researcher and black unemployed teachers in the process of in-depth interviews. This enabled the researcher to explore in depth, the perceptions and lived experiences of black unemployed teachers in terms of their specific contexts and how they structure and give meaning to their unemployed life situation.

3.2. SAMPLING

The importance of the qualitative research approach for this study manifested itself at a point where the researcher wanted to make a decision on how to select a sizable sample for the study. The researcher used purposive sampling and snowball techniques to select the relevant participants. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select respondents in terms of the extent to which they might provide useful insights into the elements of the experiences that might be shared among unemployed teachers (De Vos, 1998:191). In the case of snowball sampling, the researcher was directed to other potential participants by those who participated in the research. Accordingly, the researcher selected eight (8) unemployed black teachers who have been unemployed for more than four years from Moletjie Area of Limpopo Province. In addition, only those who had never been employed in the area in which they were trained and prepared were selected. These participants never got a chance to put into practice what they were trained for. This criterion was decided upon with the understanding that these participants have a great deal of experience of unemployment and it became apparent during the interviews that they could contribute to the study.

3.3. THE INTERVIEW PROCESS AND SETTING

The researcher was given permission by the Ethics Committee from the University of the Witwatersrand to conduct the study. Permission to conduct interview was granted by the individual participants. The research was conducted in the Moletjie area in Limpopo Province, because the researcher stays in that area**,** and she has access to the community, in which there are a number of unemployed black teachers. All the participants decided that it would be better if the researcher interviewed them at their homes, as this would be financially conducive for them. The interviews lasted for about 45 minutes. With the permission of the interviewees, the interviews were recorded. A tape-recorder allowed the researcher to concentrate on what was being said rather than on taking notes. It also allowed the researcher to keep a full record of the interview without being distracted by detailed note-keeping. The interviews were conducted primarily in English, but in most cases, participants used both Sepedi and English.

3.4. TRANSLATION

The researcher transcribed and translated the raw data from Sepedi into English. Sepedi interviews were translated, attempting to take note of the things that were difficult to translate such as proverbs, metaphors and Sepedi idioms. This was done in order to keep the translated text (target language text) as close as possible to the original or source language text, often referred to as the 'equivalence' in related literature. The process of translation also took into consideration the context, which is the environment in which an utterance occurs.

3.5. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

In keeping with the aim of the study and to have in-depth information, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants. Face-to-face interviews involve direct contact with the researcher (Denscombe, 1998: 8). In addition, face-to-face interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to establish rapport with the participants and stimulate participant's trust and cooperation, often needed to probe sensitive areas. For this study, semi-structured interviews were used with the aim of focusing on a set of predefined questions in order to understand the psychological experiences of black unemployed teachers. The interviews used were based on a semi-structured interview schedule, so as to allow the researcher to ask questions in order to gain in-depth information. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

Language-sensitive thematic content analysis was used to analyze the interview transcripts. Having translated and transcribed the interviews, the transcripts were read through several times to get a feel of any striking or interesting issues that emerged from the data. Preliminary comments were then made in the margins of the texts. The other sides of the margins were used to note the themes that began to emerge from the data. The themes were written down to form a preliminary list. Data sets that seemed to be connected were grouped into clusters as topics. Each interview text was continually checked to ensure that the topics accurately reflected what the participant had said. The final stage was to produce a table which defined the cluster topics under the main

heading. At this stage, certain topics were excluded if they were not well represented in the texts or did not fit in the topic clusters. Thus, a heading was chosen and underneath this, the relevant cluster topics were noted, with a reference as to where they had appeared in the text. This process was repeated for each of the interview transcripts. Themes were then established across the data and the master themes were combined into one list.

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics approval for the study was obtained from the university. Participants were given an information sheet about the study prior to the interview. Participants were informed that the interviews were confidential and any information provided would subsequently be anonymous. They were also told that the information gathered would be stored securely and destroyed after completion of the study (see appendix E).

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.

INTRODUCTION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the research. Six categories, described as; deciding to be a teacher, factors associated with problems while studying, practical aspects of unemployment, psychological aspects of unemployment, social aspects of unemployment and coping with unemployment were identified. The first category, deciding to be a teacher, was identified in order to allow information and expectations about career decisions to surface. It helped to find out the different reasons participants followed a teaching career path. Different reasons from participants, in as far as career choice is concerned, gave a clear picture of their expectations about their chosen career and also acted as a way of surfacing their feelings after completing the chosen course but remaining unemployed. The second category is concerned with factors associated with problems while studying. This category was identified for fairly similar reasons. The positive and negative experiences participants encountered during their training period will most likely have affected their experiences during the unemployment period. This category was identified because most participants in the study stated that they experienced difficulties during their study period, but believed that after completing their studies, they would get jobs.

The first two categories, ‘deciding to be a teacher’ and ‘factors associated with problems while studying’ are different from the others because they happened prior to the unemployment period. They are seen as relevant categories to the research as they are believed to have an impact on the present unemployment of the participants and their experiences of this situation. The other three categories; practical, social and psychological aspects of unemployment, deal with the contemporary experiences of unemployment. These categories were difficult to separate because, for example, the social status of a person affects his or her psychological well-being. It was easier to separate the practical aspects of unemployment from the other two because this category was identified as involving more concrete things such as lack of money, doing household chores, poor housing, and lack of food which are not psychological themselves but would

have psychological consequences. Even though the category of practical aspects of unemployment was easier to identify, it is clear that these factors also had an impact on the psychological aspects of unemployment.

The last category is coping with unemployment. This category outlines different coping strategies that participants used to deal with unemployment. Participants had high expectations of employment after completing their training as teachers. Most did not even think that they would be unemployed. Consequently, being educated and unemployed made the experience of unemployment very distressing. This category was, therefore, identified in order to surface practical and/or psychological strategies participants used to cope with unemployment.

4. 1. DECIDING TO BE A TEACHER

Deciding on a particular career is seldom simple; it can be a complex process with many influences and motivations. The findings of this study showed that participants' decisions to follow teaching were influenced by different factors.. Some of the reasons given were that they were motivated by the desire to share knowledge with other people. Some saw teaching as an opportunity to change other people's lives. This is suggested by the view that teaching is a vocation or a calling. Some participants hoped that teaching would provide a regular salary and good working conditions, while others said that they liked working with children and young adults. Interestingly, one participant said that she followed a teaching career as it was her parents' choice.

4.1.1. Sharing of knowledge and ideas

Sharing of knowledge motivated some of the participants in this research to follow a teaching career. Some teachers, as Duke (1984:22) argues, follow a teaching career because they enjoy the satisfaction of helping learning minds to grow, of sharing knowledge and knowing that they are doing something that is essential for the development and continuation of society. In support of the above view, half of the participants (4/8) stated that they chose a teaching career because they wanted to share knowledge and ideas acquired during their teacher training with other people. They

further said that they become fulfilled and had peace of mind after sharing ideas and knowledge with others. The following responses from the participants provide evidence for this point.

> Participant G: *I get fulfilled and happy after sharing knowledge and ideas with other people* (p46: Para 4).
>
> Participant H: *I like working with people and sharing knowledge* (p51, Para 2).
>
> Participant C: *I like helping people and sharing knowledge that I have with others. I realized that teaching will give me an opportunity to be in contact with children and young people and as a result I will have an opportunity to help shaping their minds and grooming them to be better adults in future (p21 :Para 3).*
>
> Participant A: *I like talking and sharing ideas with other people* (p7, Para 4).

Participants' perceptions about sharing knowledge were similar to that of Price (1964:19):

> In teaching, not only can you get enjoyment from passing knowledge to others, but you can also have the unique pleasure of introducing other people to the interest which gives you so much satisfaction.

However, it is also important to note that teaching is not only about the sharing of knowledge; it is also about imparting new knowledge to those who don't have it and is also a form of social interaction with learners.

4. 1.2. An opportunity to change other people's lives

To many people, teaching is not just a job which gives them a salary at the end of the month, but is viewed as an opportunity to influence and change other people's lives in a positive way. This theme puts forward the argument that some teachers might enter into a teaching profession because of a commitment to make a difference in other people's lives

and enable them to start better lives. Results of this study support the above view when a number of participants (7/8) pointed out that they followed a teaching career path because they felt that it would give them opportunities to help change other people's lives. The following examples are explicitly referred to by some of the participants:

> Participant F: *It is an interesting career where I feel I will make a difference in other people's lives* (p39, Para 2*).*

> Participant H: *I feel that through teaching you can make a change in other people's lives. I feel happy after teaching a person something and seeing that he or she has learnt it* (p51, Para 2).

The participants' responses showed that the satisfaction that came from helping someone see something differently is one of the important attractions that teaching provided. This was further confirmed by one of the participants in a study conducted by Thornton *et al* (2002: 37):

> I am one of these strange people who feel that they are here for a reason. I want to make a difference. I want to be working and helping people. In teaching you are working with people, helping people. You are interacting and you can make a difference.

For one to change other people's lives, one's life needs to be changed first. So, teaching as a profession gives one an opportunity to change his or her life before transferring this change to others. This further suggests that some people chose teaching because they see it as a calling.

4. 1.3. Teaching as a Vocation or Calling

Teaching is explicitly referred as a vocation or a calling by some of the participants in this study. Vocations or callings are closely related as both refer to moral commitment and dedication to serve others or work without looking primarily at personal gains and needs. A teacher with a vocation feels that he or she is serving others and also derives personal satisfaction from his or her work. The majority of the participants (5/8) said that

they followed a teaching career because it was a calling for them. The following points were made by the participants:

> Participant D: *To me teaching was a call from God. I never hesitated or have doubts when I received an acceptance letter from the University of the North that I am accepted.* (p37: Para10).

> Participant G: *Teaching is a calling for me* (p46, Para 4).

The above quotes from the participants correspond with Hayward's (2002:3) study that argues that teaching is much more than just a way of earning a living; "it is also seen as an important and worthwhile work, aiming at developing human beings and it offers something that money cannot provide." From these perspectives, it is possible to suggest that people who followed a particular career or job due to the fact that it was a calling may often experience unusual or especially high levels of stress and trauma when their calling is never actualized.

4.1.4. Teaching as providing a good salary and good working conditions

Teaching is seen by some people in this study as having secure working conditions, many attractive benefits and lots of vacation time. This was particularly noted by half of the participants (4/8) who mentioned that a good salary and good working conditions were of prime importance and motivated them to follow teaching. The participants highlighted the fact that they thought that a good salary would offer them opportunities to go on holiday with their loved ones while others described good working conditions in terms of having many holidays in a year and a less demanding workload. Some typical examples of what the participants said were:

> Participant F: *As a mother, it is quite a better career for me because teachers have many holidays and this will give me an opportunity to be with my family. Again, teachers knock off early and the salary is good* (p39, Para 2).

> Participant C: *I was also motivated to follow a teaching profession because of good salary and many holidays* (p21, Para 3).
>
> Participant G: *The other reason for following teaching profession is that teachers work nicely without sweating and they have many holidays and their salary is good* (p48, Para 16).

Similarly, Sikes, Measor and Woods (1985:1) note that some teachers see teaching more instrumentally as a useful job from the point of view of pay, holidays and conditions of work. Participants in this study echoed the above statement when they said that they followed a teaching career because the 'salary is good'.

It is clear that participants in this study view teaching differently from the respondents in Motimele & Dieltiens (2005) study who perceive teaching as a job with workload stress and low remuneration packages and lack of career advancement. The participants' view that teaching is a good paying job with less workload stress and many benefits might be due to the fact that they are staying in rural areas where the cost of living is low as compared to urban areas. The other reason might be that in rural areas teaching is still highly valued as most people are not educated and the few that are educated are teachers. It seems that due to a lower cost of living in rural areas, teachers afford better lifestyles as compared to other people and this, to a greater extent, might have influenced the participants' view of teaching as a well-paying job.

4. 1.5. Working with children and young people

The outcome of this research showed that some participants chose teaching because they enjoyed working with children and being in their company. Such are people who have patience and are good at handling children. Over half of the participants (5/8) said that they liked working with children and young people. They further pointed out that they followed a teaching career because they liked to encourage people, especially children and young people, in order to develop their full potential as human beings. The following responses from the participants provide evidence for this point:

Participant G: *I like teaching with all my heart more especially teaching young children who are still at primary school. They are willing to receive information and knowledge that will mould and change their lives. They are so exciting to me* (p46, Para 4).

Participant E: *I also love to work with young people* (p33, Para 5).

Working with children and improving their life chances were perceived by participants in this research as something that would give them a high degree of job satisfaction. Krecic and Grmek (2005:267) indicate that some people followed a teaching career because they liked working with children. One of the participants in Krecic and Grmek's study said that he chose to be a teacher because he liked to work with children. He also stated that if he got a job in school after finishing university, his wishes would have come true. One of the greatest attractors, listed most commonly by the people who indicated that they were interested in pursuing teaching as a career, was that they would like to work with children and following this, that teaching would allow them to work with people.

4.2. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED WHILE STUDYING

There is a general opinion that education is the key to life. On the other hand, education is not free; it costs a lot, more especially tertiary education. In the apartheid era, only few black people would afford to pay education fees for their children. They struggled and pushed hard to put their children through tertiary education. Most participants (6/8) confirmed this when they said that they encountered difficulties while studying. The financial difficulties and lack of access to library facilities were related to shortage of money. The old saying that 'perseverance is the mother of success' became evident in this research when two participants stated that even though they encountered financial hardships during their training, they persevered with the hope that after completing their studies, they would get employed and experience financial freedom. The participants further said that they had serious financial difficulties during their studying period, which denied them access to library facilities. The following were some of the responses from the participants:

> Participant H: *It was difficult for me to travel. But I had no option I was forced to travel from home to college everyday because my mother could not afford to pay hostel fees with the little disability grant. Travelling was also inconveniencing and affecting my performance negatively because at home I had no opportunity to use library and other college facilities. I had to wake up early in the morning to catch the bus and come back late in the evening. In most cases when I got home in the evening I was very tired. It was hard but I* had *no option* (p51, Para 4).

> Participant D: *I did not have access to the library during the night, and there was no electricity where I was staying. It was hard during those years but I kept my focus on books believing that perseverance is the mother of success* (p27, Para 6).

Findings of this research further showed that some participants were studying under very difficult conditions such as going to college on an empty stomach. The following examples provide evidence for this point:

> Participant D: *Actually I can say that I struggled to make ends meet during my studying period. Sometimes I went to school without food but my love for teaching motivated me to go on even during difficult times* (p27, Para 4).

> Participant E: *I remember there were several days when my mother and my younger siblings stayed for days without eating proper food in favour of our education* (p33, Para 6).

It was clearly indicated in the interviews that some participants continued with their studies, even though they had no food because of the vision and the goals they had in life and their love for teaching. This showed that some participants in this study endured a great deal to be qualified teachers. Participants' determination to continue with their studies, despite the financial difficulties they encountered is complemented by Ryan and Cooper's (1992: 384) argument that "many people in the society have thought that education could eliminate poverty and free people from the chains of unemployment".

Black people, mostly from rural areas, believe that education can free people from poverty. As a result, most people in rural areas followed a teaching career with the hope that it would free them from the chains of unemployment and poverty. Similarly, prior to the democratic government, teachers were the ones who were not struggling to find jobs due to their level of education.

Lack of career guidance, institutions and exposure to other professions in rural areas contributed to many people following teaching, which is affordable, well-known and within reach to most black people in rural areas. This led to production of many teachers in rural areas.

All the participants in this study believed that after completing their training as teachers, it could be easier for them to get jobs. It is interesting to note that one of the six graduates from McGill University quoted by Came (1992:1) had the same perception as participants in this research. He said; "when I hit university, I felt positive about the chances that when I finish, I would be able to find a job quickly".

4. 3. PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Practical difficulties of unemployment were a common experience amongst all the participants in this study. In this research, practical aspects of unemployment refer to things like lack of food and proper housing. Unemployed people might experience a lot of anxiety and distress because of their inability to do basic things that are needed in everyday life like putting food on the table and building or buying a house. All participants (8/8) said that they have experienced practical problems that came with unemployment. Some participants said that they are currently living in poor housing conditions because they could not afford to build or buy houses. Some of the statements said by participants are:

> Participant H: *We are living in a small house made of wood and there are spaces between the woods* (p52, Para 6).

Participant E: *Whole family of 5 children is staying in a small two-roomed tin house (p33, intro Para).*

Participant C: *Now I am 35 years old, not married and not working. I don't even know when I am going to get married (p24, Para 13).*

Participant G*: I am unable to support my children and do things for them (p50, Para 20).*

The consequences of practical aspects of unemployment have serious negative impact on the person's psychological well-being.

4.4. PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Several studies have shown that unemployment has negative impacts on the person's psychological functioning. Experiences of most participants (7/8) in this study concurred with the above statement. They stated that they experienced feelings of failure, uselessness and frustration. Others expressed profound disappointment, due to their failed expectations. Fineman, (1983:36) also states that unemployment has negative consequences; "employment provides a pattern of activity so deeply ingrained that its absence results in a fundamental negative psychological reaction"**.** This section discusses the psychological aspects of unemployment. The following topics will be discussed under; experiences of failure, uselessness and frustration, inability to fulfil male responsibilities, the experience of gossip or criticism from community members and the psychological consequences of failed interviews.

4.4.1. EXPERIENCES OF FAILURE, 'USELESSNESS' AND FRUSTRATION

The experience of joblessness is often accompanied by negative experiences and feelings of failure and disappointment. This fact was clearly discerned from all the participants (8/8) who stated that they felt like "losers, failures" in life. They further pointed out that these feelings were exacerbated by the fact that they were educated and they expected to get good jobs that have a high status in the community. When they failed to get teaching

jobs, they perceived themselves as failures. They also said that these feelings of failure were coupled with feelings of disappointment and failed expectations. These feelings might further be exacerbated by the fact that for some participants teaching was a vocation. Examples of what the participants said were as follows:

> Participant E: *I saw myself as nothing and to me life meant nothing because all my hard work and sacrifices towards my studies turned into nothing, I saw myself as a failure in life; I also believed that I failed my mother who worked hard to make me educated* (p35, Para 17).
>
> Participant F: *Sometimes I feel that I am a failure* (p39, Para 4).
>
> Participant D: *I feel that I am a failure in life* (p29, Para 15).

Feelings of disappointment were also explicitly expressed by participants. For example;

> Participant F: *Right now I am disappointed. Having qualifications but not working is frustrating and stressing. I feel that I have wasted my time, money and energy for nothing. My main objective of going to university was to get a better job. Now I am highly disappointed because my objective is not met* (p43, Para 24).
>
> Participant C*: I am disappointed, seriously disappointed* (p21, Para 4).
> Participant G*: I am disappointed* (p48, Para 14).

Results of this research showed that feelings of failure are often common in unemployed people, especially those who have specific skills and knowledge acquired from a lengthy period of education and training with the hope that they will be employed upon completion of their studies or training. This finding was also confirmed by one of the participants in Fineman (1983) study. The participant in Fineman's study said; “I still feel I have failed as a person by being unemployed, job failure equals personal failure”. Another participant in Hayes and Nutman (1981) said:

> Even if the individual is part of large group of unemployed people, for a person brought up in a work oriented society, so long as Bert Jones across the street is employed, Alf Smith is bound to feel dishonoured and a failure when unemployed (Hayes and Nutman, 1981).

The participants' experiences of failure, uselessness and frustration were made worse by the fact that they never got a chance to put into practice what they were trained for.

4.4.1. (a) The inability to fulfil male responsibilities

Inability to fulfil male responsibilities surfaced as one of the reasons that contributed to feelings of failure and uselessness. All male participants (4/8) revealed that unemployment has induced a feeling that they have failed as men, breadwinners and providers of their families where they were supposed to provide financial needs. One of the male participants pointed out that it is painful and disabling to know that he cannot even afford to buy food for his children, not to mention paying school fees. The following were some of the responses from the participants:

> Participant A: *Our first born (daughter) is at Technikon this year and she is her responsibility. This make me feel inferior as a man* (p 12, para 52).

> Participant D: *Right now I am of no help to my family. I can't even afford to put food on the table* (p27, Para 7).

> Participant G: *It pains me to know that l am unable to support my children and do things for them* (p49, Para 20).

> Participant C: *Unemployment is frustrating more especially if you are a man* (p20 Para 1).

It seems that the inability to fulfil male responsibilities as a man or head of the family can lead to lack of respect from family members. This view was supported by some of the male participants in this study. One of the participants mentioned that his wife does not

respect him any more and that she does not care about him. The participant also said that the fact that his wife does not respect him made him feel useless and inferior. The following responses were given by participants:

> Participant A: *At times I feel that I am nothing like she used to say because as a man I am unable to fulfil what I am suppose to do due to unemployment* (p 12, Para 54).

> Participant C: *I have learned that if you are not working, other members of the family do not treat you like a man (*p22, Para 8).

Kelvin and Jarrett (1985: 60) argue that inability to carry out male responsibilities as a man often results in lack of respect, as was the case with the participants;

> Unemployment induces a feeling that one has failed in the role of father as breadwinner, as provider of the strictly material needs of the household, and in as much as a man's status and authority in his family derive from his role as a provider.

On the same note, Warr (1985:22) indicated that around the late 1930s, married men had family responsibilities as breadwinners. This meant that if they were unemployed, their responsibilities were mostly not met and this brought about feelings of inferiority on their side. It was mentioned in the section relating to the decision to be a teacher that many participants followed a teaching career because they thought that it would provide a good salary that would enable them to provide for their families. Failure to get a teaching job might increase the level of uselessness, more especially for men who are traditionally perceived to be the providers of their families. Even though women in modern societies are also engaged in formal and paid work, it is commonly understood that women are not the primary bread winners in their homes and therefore, they rely on their spouses' salary to support the bulk of their needs.

4.4.1. (b) The experience of gossip and criticism from community members

Unemployed participants often experience gossip or criticism from community members and these gossips often make them to feel ashamed, doubt themselves and lose self-confidence. Half of the participants (4/8) pointed out that gossip and criticism from members of the community affected them negatively. The participants mentioned that some members of the community were spreading rumours that for example, they did not pass well at college and that they were dishonest about their qualifications. The following statements were made by the participants:

> Participant F*: Others say that we have bought the qualifications* (p44, para 29).
>
> Participant C: *Some of them spread rumours that we did not pass well at college* (p23, para 15).

At face value, one can agree with participants' notion that gossip is a common phenomenon mostly in rural areas because many of the rural people are unemployed and they have a lot of time to come together and talk about issues of life in general. In the participants' view, this includes gossiping about their unemployment.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that as members of the community, participants should not take offence at these gossips as they are part and parcel of any community's culture. Much the same, it can also be acknowledged that gossip, as participants highlighted, may have detrimental effects on the person's well-being.

4.4.1.(c) The psychological consequences of failed interviews

A number of unsuccessful job interviews are almost always stressful and frustrating to the job-seeker. Over half of the participants (5/8) pointed out that they have been applying for posts and attending interviews but they did not succeed, which was frustrating. One participant said that he even asked for some tips of how to handle an interview from friends, former lecturers and other educated people in his community, but he still failed the interviews. Some typical examples of what the participants said were:

> Participant G: *I consulted other people, read books about how to pass an interview, prepare myself thoroughly before going for an interview. But still there was no success (*p45, para 1).
>
> Participant E: *Just imagine for six years, every year you attend interviews, still you are told that you have been unsuccessful. You feel like you are a fool, you know nothing* (p37, para 25).
>
> Participant C: *There are many interviews that I have attended but I never succeeded even once* (p23, para 14).
>
> Participant F: *When I attended interviews and did not succeed I feel I am a looser and I feel bad about myself* (p39, para 4).
>
> Participant B: *I attended a number of interviews and in some of the interviews I performed well but not smart to be hired as a teacher* (p17, para 22).

The participants showed that repeated failure in the interviews was frustrating. One participant in Fineman (1983: 66) had this to say:

> I can't get a position – constant rejection. I have filled so many forms to get just one interview, which didn't come to anything. The results are always negative.

However, one participant in this current research said that she has never been called for an interview. The participant said:

> Participant H: *I have spent almost six years being unemployment; I have never been called for an interview* (p52, para 8).

It appears that continued failure in the interviews made the participant's experiences of unemployment much worse.

4.4.1.(d) The demoralizing effects of perceived favouritism and nepotism

Favouritism and nepotism were highlighted as demoralizing during the shortlisting and interviewing process of unemployed teachers. Over half of the participants (5/8) pointed out that they were demoralized and frustrated by the effects of favouritism and nepotism in the teaching field. They said that the principle of 'son of the soil' (referring to nepotism) was used in some schools. It was believed that people would be employed because of their birth place not due to their performance in the interviews. Participants stated that nepotism and favouritism was taking place in the interviews themselves and even in the short-listing process. Participants expressed their frustration in this way:

> Participant H: *There is a lot of favouritism and nepotism in the teaching field. People are employing their cousins. If you do not have connections just forget* (p53, para 9).
>
> Participant C: *Nepotism at schools is very rife. Some schools use the principle of son of the soil to employ* (p23, para14).
>
> Participant D: *I just want to say that there is a lot of nepotism and unfairness in the interviews* (p31, para 24).
>
> Participant F: *There is a lot of favouritism and nepotism when coming to employing teachers. Some schools do not advertise vacant posts that they have. They just handpick people* (p38, para 1).
>
> Participant G: *From that time I had a negative attitude towards interviews because I fail to see the reason for an interview, favouritism and nepotism is at its best in teachers' employment* (p46, para 2).

Most participants in this research felt that some teachers were employed because of the good networks they have with the employers, not because they were competent for the advertised job. It is striking to note that many participants used the word 'nepotism' to emphasise the biased selection procedures used in order to get employment.

4.4.2. SOCIAL ISOLATION

The findings of this, study and those of Jackson and Walsh (1987) reveal that unemployment often results in loss of social relationships and contacts with other people. Half of the participants (4/8) reported that they decided to stay indoors because they did not want to be in the company of others due to the fact that they are unemployed. Others indicate that lack of financial resources led them to stay indoors and this lead to social isolation. The following responses were noted by participants in this research:

> Participant H: *I also avoid social contacts with other educated people, who are working. I don't even want to attend graduation ceremonies* (p55, para 21).
>
> Participant D: *There are times that I feel I don't want to meet other people* (p29, para 15).
>
> Participant F: *At times I feel not being in the company of other people more especially those who are working* (p39, para 5).
>
> Participant C: *I am smoking cigarette and drinking beers and when I go out for a drink people often tease me by saying come on I will buy you a drink because you are not working. In most cases I find myself in a situation that I do not even have one cent to buy cigarette. I end up avoiding social situations and staying indoors* (p20, para 2).

Jackson and Walsh's study (1987: 203) reveal that unemployment can also lead to social isolation:

> The basis of this isolation is more than simply the inability to socialise which lack of money brings, there are more personal factors that may lead to isolation, for example, the stigma of being unemployed, the feelings of having nothing to say when a group discuss the jobs they have and the desire to avoid embarrassment of having to answer questions about whether one has a job or not.

Fryer *et.al* (1987) state that unemployed people often avoid social gatherings because they avoid answering questions related to their unemployment and keep quiet when

people discuss other related issues. Findings of this research revealed that unemployment, more especially for educated people, often brings feelings of inferiority which can in turn lead to withdrawal from social activities and increasing social isolation.

4.5. SOCIAL ASPECTS OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Previous sections of this chapter showed how negative feelings such as feeling of uselessness, failure, frustration and social isolation have a potent impact on the participants' psychological well-being. This section explores the external consequences of unemployment, which in this case relate to the participants' experiences of the absence and presence of social support from their family members, friends and community members. Shams (1993:179), in his study concerning social support and psychological well-being among unemployed men, states that social support reduces the negative effects of unemployment.

4.5.1. Support from the family

The family is a primary support system. Positive support from family members results in the development of positive self-esteem while on the other hand lack of support from parents and siblings can results in a negative self-image. Over half (5/8) of the participants stated that family members were emotionally and morally supportive during their period of unemployment. Some participants stated that family members helped them in looking for jobs; if they heard that there were teaching posts somewhere, they would phone to tell them about the posts. They further indicated that they would encourage them to apply for jobs when they felt discouraged to do so. The following examples were explicitly said by the participants:

> Participant F*: My children are supportive and they are also trying to help me find a job. If they hear that there are vacant teaching posts they will tell me* (p42, Para 17).

> Participant H: *If they hear that there are advertised teaching posts somewhere they phone me and encourage me to submit my application* (p53, Para 12).

Family members were also reported as being financially supportive. Some of the participants mentioned that their spouses supported them financially throughout their unemployment period. The following were examples of their responses:

> Participant H: *If I need money to post my applications forms or to submit them personally he gives me* (p53, Para13*)*.
>
> Participant G: *My wife is very much supportive. She works as a domestic worker and she is taking care of the family financially. I really appreciate her effort* (p49, Para 20).
>
> Participant B: *He was there for me all the years playing the role of a breadwinner in the family and he never complained* (p19, Para 29).

However, one participant commented that even though he received a certain amount of support from the extended family, he experienced lack of support from his immediate family members. The participant strongly believed that his status of being financially unstable led to lack of support from family members.

Overall, it appears that emotional, social and financial support from family members made the unemployed teachers feel that they were not alone. Support from family members gave them courage to apply for jobs when they were discouraged.

4.5.2. Support and lack of support from friends

Findings of this study revealed that positive support from friends played an important role during their unemployment period. The majority of the participants (6/8) shared the same opinion that their friends were supportive during their unemployment period. Three participants said that some of their friends helped them to look for jobs. Participants also said that the process of looking for jobs was sometimes made less painful by the support they got from their friends. Some typical examples of what were included by participants are:

Participant F: *If they hear that there is an advertised teaching post somewhere they phone me and encourage me to apply* (p41, Para 13).

Participant A: *My friends are supportive and encouraging. When they hear that there is a post somewhere they phone me and they also help me financially at times* (p8, para 24).

Participant A: *I have a friend who stays in Johannesburg. He is very much supportive. He visits me; sometimes he calls me to his place to look for a job that side. He even gives me money to come back home (p8, Para 15).*

Some participants pointed out that their friends were not just practically helpful but they were also emotionally available and they gave them courage. The following statements were mentioned by participants:

Participant F: *I had supportive friends who stood by me through thick and thin. Even now they are still very much supportive. They are open and warm. I know that they are there for me if I want to talk* (p41, Para 13).

Participant H: *Friends gave me courage to go on when things were difficult* (p52, Para 5).

Participant G: *When I became discouraged they gave me courage to go on* (p46, Para 8).

It is worth noting that the issue of friends as source of support was confirmed by a participant in a study concerning moral support received during the unemployment period conducted by Fineman (1983:106).The participant in Fineman's study said:

Support was greatest from the friends, one of the friends actually arranged a job interview for me; some people will go out of their way to help a friend.

However, the idea that 'when days are dark, friends are few'[1]was experienced by two participants in this study who highlighted lack of social support from friends during the unemployment period. These participants indicated that some friends withdrew social contacts. The following responses were mentioned by participants:

> Participant B*: Some of my friends from college neglected and avoided me just because I am not working as a teacher. Some of them think that I will be a financial burden to them* (p17, Para 19).

> Participant C*: I remember one friend of mine is a qualified teacher and was also unemployed for some years. During the unemployed years we were good friends, visiting each other and giving each other support. He got a teaching post in 2003. Presently as I am talking to you he is a changed person. It seems as if we were never friends and we do not know each other* (p22, Para 10).

Findings of this study revealed that majority of the participants' experienced positive support from friends. Nonetheless, two participants encountered lack of support from friends when they needed it the most. Moller's (1992) study concerning quality of life in unemployment indicated that "majority of people who lose their jobs often lose friends". What is striking is the sense of betrayal as expressed by participant C. In addition to neglect, participants also experienced a sense of betrayal from friends during their unemployment.

4.5.3. Support and lack of support from the community

The results of this study showed that community members were mostly supportive of the participants during their period of unemployment. Over half of the participants, (5/8), said that community members felt sorry for them, others wished them luck when they were going for the interviews. Participants further said that they received a certain degree

[1] This phrase is borrowed from South African jazz artist Sipho Gumede's song 'When Days are Dark, Friends are Few' in the album, *Blues for my Mother*. Date unknown.

of trust and respect from community members even though they were unemployed. The following are excerpts from the participants' responses:

> Participant C: *You just see that most people feel sorry for you and some of them even pray for us and wish us good luck when we are going for interviews* (p23, Para 15).

> Participant H: *I feel that they feel sorry for me and they are trying their best to help me, for example, if some people within the community hear about a vacant post somewhere they tell me* (p54, Para 16).

> Participant E: *Because of their belief in education they see me as an eye of the community and they respect me for that* (p36, Para 18).

> Participant G: *They trust and believe that I can help them give advice that will build them* (p49, Para 21).

However, three out of eight participants stated that they received negative criticism from some members of their community, and such comments made them feel useless and appear stupid. In addition, some community members told them that they were not looking for jobs and that they were lazy. They reported that some community members blamed them for being unemployed and others blamed them for choosing a teaching career. For example, participants said:

> Participant D: *They think that we have just wasted money by going to college. Some of them shamelessly tell us that other people are working and say that we don't want to work, we are lazy and we enjoy spending most time sleeping* (p29, Para 16).

> Participant B: *They say that we did not try our best to look for a job while others say that our performance at college was not good that is why we cannot get jobs* (p16, Para 17).

> Participant F: *Other community members blame us. They say it is our fault and ignorance to follow teaching because we knew even when we were still studying as teachers that there are no jobs* (p42, para 19).

The participants' experiences of lack of support from community members are reiterated in Paledi's (2000: 26) comments that society perceives the unemployed person as being lazy, irresponsible, lacking the purpose to live, meaning that he or she is a lesser person.

From the findings of this study, it became evident that a number of people in black communities provide both social and psychological support to its members. Shams (1993:183), argues that "higher levels of social support are evident among the minority communities due to the strength of ethnic ties and a more concerned social milieu". Although black South Africans cannot be described as a minority community, some of the features of minority communities are characteristic of what western research suggests. The assumption is that black rural communities are very supportive of each other and these co-operative relationships exist because of the existence of extended families.

4.6. COPING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT

This section highlights how participants coped with the negative and painful effects of unemployment. Coping mechanisms are therefore important. The section below outlines some of the different coping strategies that were used by participants. The coping strategies identified are as follows: having a positive outlook, community participation, self-employment and other ways of keeping busy.

4 .6.1. Having a positive outlook

All participants (8/8) pointed out that they have learned to somehow accept some aspects of their position as unemployed teachers. They stated that accepting helped them to live positively with the consequences of unemployment. They affirmed that being positive is one of the best strategies for dealing with the consequences of unemployment. The following responses from the participants illustrate this point:

> Participant H: *I have accepted the fact that I am not working and that there is no work for me now. Being positive that one day I will get a job also helps me* (p54, Para 19).
>
> Participant F: *I tell myself that my day will come. One day I will get a job and work* (p43, Para 25).
>
> Participant G: *But at the end of the day I learned to be positive and accepted my situation and be positive about life* (p50, Para 23).

The participants' experiences concur with Patton and Donohue (1998:333) who observe that many participants were able to manage stress associated with unemployment more effectively by adopting a positive attitude towards their situations. Patton and Donohue's perspective is echoed by Fielded and Davidson (2001:326) who indicate that unemployed male managers maintained high levels of self-esteem and self-confidence through their positive approach to their unemployment situation. Some of the participants also remarked that because they had accepted that there were no teaching jobs for them, they started looking for other jobs in companies, furniture shops and clothing stores. Examples of participants' responses were as follows:

> Participant A: *I also looked for other jobs at factories and companies* (p8, Para 22*).*
>
> Participant D: *Sometimes I looked for jobs in the supermarket, clothing stores and furniture shops* (p28, Para 11).
>
> Participant F: *I also applied for other posts that are not teaching oriented* (p41, Para 15).

Looking for alternative jobs might not be widely seen as a coping strategy, but some of the participants saw it as a way of coping with unemployment. It was earlier pointed out

in Chapter 2 of this study that one of the transitions that unemployed people go through is acceptance. Hayes and Nutman (1981: 11) agree with this view:

> Eventually, unemployed people start to realize and accept that they are unemployed. In moving on from this acceptance phase, they start to test out their new life space.

4.6.2. Community Participation

A number of participants (6/8) saw community participation as another way of coping with unemployment. Participants said that they enjoyed voluntary community work and it kept them busy and active. During the interviews, participants mentioned that they were involved in different community organisations and projects. According to the participants, being involved in community work made them forget that they were unemployed. The following responses from the participants support this point:

> Participant C: *Being actively involved in the community reduced my stress level. During my community participation, I realized that I am adding value to the whole community. In fact I can say my contributions in the community were positively welcomed and appreciated by many people. Positive feedback from people gave me courage and hope in life. Being in the company of other people also helped me a lot* (p24, Para 19).

> Participant G: *I participated in the cancer awareness programs as community activities and this gave me a great opportunity to talk to people. I also formed an organization for disabled people* (p48, Para 14-15).

> Participant E: *I volunteered to teach in one of the primary schools in Seshego* (p33, Para 7).

> Participant F: *I am involved in the adult school education where we are teaching adult people after hours* (p43, Para 26).

Participant D: *I am involved in the community outreach program that is run by my church* (p30, Para 20).

Participant B: *I work with HIV-positive people, help them by organizing home based care organizations to come and help them at their homes because in some cases other patients are staying alone* (p17, pare 23).

Community participation, especially volunteer work, was regarded by participants as a form of coping mechanism that left them fulfilled and feeling that they were doing something important for others. Similarly, Mmusi (2003:29) argues that offering services voluntarily to the community helps unemployed people cope with unemployment and during the process, some realize their talents and creativity. Patton and Donohue (1998:340) also argue that individuals who actively engaged in community activities coped well with the experiences of unemployment. Moynagh (1985) has also indicated that offering help to the elderly and disabled within the community helps the unemployed to find new values and strength.

4.6.3. Self-employment and other ways to keep busy.

Self-employment is another way of making money and also keeping oneself busy. Unemployed people have too much time and some of them spend most of their time doing nothing. The majority of the participants (7/8) in this study state that they were engaged in self-employment activities such as selling various products to community members. They indicated that focusing their time and attention on other things made them feel useful. Some typical examples of what the participants said were:

Participant B: *I am selling medicine to sick people in the community* (p17, Para 23).

Participant C: *Selling ladies handbags, straw-heads and wallets. The business keeps us busy* (p22, Para 8).

Participant D: *I am also selling some sport clothes, T-shirts and tekkies. This keeps me busy* (p29, Para 15).

A study done by the HSRC (2006) stated that one of the steps taken by unemployed graduates to find a livelihood was considering self-employment. The steps taken by the unemployed graduates to find work in the HSRC study were regarded as methods of searching for work. However, in my study, these steps are interpreted as another way of coping with unemployment.

Some participants remarked that after realizing that unemployment affected them negatively, they started to keep themselves busy by reading motivational books, books on stress management and talking and sharing ideas with others. They further indicated that through reading and sharing ideas with other people, they learned new ways or strategies of coping with unemployment.
For example:

> Participant A: *I like talking to people more especially when I am stressed. I also like reading books and stories about stress management* (p10, Para 34).

> Participant H: *Reading books and magazines about stress management helped me to deal and manage my stress level* (p54, Para 19).

Patton and Donohue (1998:340) similarly point out that even though leisure activities cannot replace the results of paid work, they increase social contact and reduce the frustrations of being unemployed. Haralambos (1991:384) also pointed out that spending more time doing housework, reading, engaging in practical activities and hobbies help the unemployed to cope with unemployment.

In conclusion, the effects of both the psychological and social aspects of unemployment have been explored in this section. Findings of this study reveal that the psychosocial effects of unemployment had detrimental effects on the participants' life. Some of the participants reported that unemployment made them feel useless; others said that they felt like failures in life. Yet, others indicated that unemployment isolated them from friends other members of the community. In order to cope with these difficulties, participants in

this study utilised different coping strategies like having a positive outlook and community participation. Coping strategies that were used by participants in this study helped them a great deal. This indicates that coping strategies are important and useful and suggests that unemployed teachers need to be exposed to other coping techniques. It also appeared from this study that black people, especially from rural areas, are supportive towards each other. This might be due to the fact that in rural areas, most people are not engaged in formal work and they are used to the tradition of sharing unlike the common view in many western societies where people are often mentioned as needing to work to maintain themselves.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter involves a summary of the findings and a discussion of the scope and limitations of the study, entailing a critical examination of this study as an example of qualitative research. Suggestions for further research and recommendations are made in light of these findings.

5.1. SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The findings of this research are summarized in relation to the research questions and aims of this study which were stated in chapter one.

The first question concerns the perceptions of black unemployed teachers about being both educated and unemployed. In response to this question, participants indicated that they experienced feelings of failure, disappointment and frustration. These feelings were worsened by their own expectations, the expectations of community members and the belief that educated people do not struggle to get jobs. The common perception was that with education, comes employment. The belief that education serves as an access into occupations of high status has motivated black people in South Africa to get education.

Most people in rural areas perceive teaching as a highly-valued, well-paying and respected profession and, as a result, many people in rural areas wish to follow a teaching career. The fact that teaching was held in high esteem in rural areas might be due to lack of awareness of alternative professions, lack of career guidance and lack of exposure to other well-paying work opportunities. Similarly, lack of funds as well as bursaries to attend other institutions of higher learning, such as technical colleges and universities, might have also influenced the choice of teaching in rural areas.

The good salary expected in the teaching profession was also mentioned in this study as one of the reasons that motivated participants to choose the profession. One might argue

that the sense of teaching as a well-paying job does not apply to many people in other communities. This was evident in a study conducted by the HSRC (2005, as cited in Motimele and Dieltiens). The study reported that 45% of teachers admitted that they had considered pursuing careers outside the public schools. The reasons provided for this were dissatisfaction with remuneration packages, workload stress and lack of career advancement. The perception of teaching as a well-paying job might be specific to certain periods and communities such as those in rural areas.

It is evident from this research that the different reasons that motivated the participants to follow a teaching career encouraged them to persevere and study hard despite the financial and practical difficulties they encountered. They hoped that after completing their training, they would be employed. Failure to get employment in the career they have been prepared for, and the fact that they never got an opportunity to put into practice what they were trained for, made their experiences of unemployment much worse.

The second question explored how the participants experienced their relationships with family members and close friends. This study revealed that majority of friends and family members acted as sources of support during the unemployment period. It was further revealed that positive support from friends and family members and encouragement during the difficult times of unemployment helped the unemployed to stay positive. Sham (1993:178) indicates that “family support had positive effects on unemployed men’s psychological health”. Even though Sham's study was on unemployed British men, it is interesting to note that his findings concurred with results of the present study in relation to positive support received from family members.

However, Moller (1992:38) shows that “unemployed individuals felt that people avoided them and that people who lose their jobs often lose their friends”. The participants too revealed that some of their friends withdrew social contact.

The third question investigated the perceptions of their community or society about unemployed teachers and how the teachers respond to those perceptions. On being asked what they thought the community perceptions of them were and how they responded to those perceptions, the teachers said that community members offered them support during their unemployment period. Although positive support from community members did not take away the pain of unemployment, it was felt less acutely as a personal stigma when they had support. It is important to note that the support given by community members to the unemployed teachers is not an unexpected feature of black rural communities. In black African cultures, especially in rural areas, the bond of extended families often still holds and they often live in the same house or village. As a result, family and community members know each other and very often support each other.

The final question examined the coping strategies used by the participants to deal with unemployment. This study revealed that different coping strategies used by participants helped them in different ways to deal with negative consequences of unemployment. Coping strategies such as having a positive outlook, community participation, self-employment and other ways of keeping busy as mentioned by participants, played an essential part in helping them during their unemployment period. For example, participants mentioned that developing a positive attitude towards their situation helped them to accept the fact that there were no teachings posts available for them. This motivated them to look for other jobs besides teaching, for example, in factories, furniture stores and clothing stores. Looking for alternative jobs for some participants was a way of coping with unemployment. The findings of this study confirmed that coping mechanisms are important when a person is in a difficult situation, like being unemployed. If the participants did not use the different coping resources mentioned above, they might not have survived the negative psychological results of unemployment.

Overall, this research revealed, as might be expected, that unemployment has negative psychological consequences such as feelings of failure, uselessness, disappointment and frustration. In addition, being an unemployed teacher made the experience much worse. The study further showed that even though negative effects of unemployment were

experienced by both men and women, men seemed to be affected the most because of their status in the family. The traditional view that men are providers and heads of the family made unemployed men feel inferior. However, big support from families, friends and the community at large gave them hope which made the experience of unemployment less painful.

When this study was conducted in 2003 there were high rates of teacher unemployment in the area where the research was done as well as in other provinces in South Africa. However, the implementation of severance packages and redeployment processes by the government as a way of addressing teacher unemployment, assisted in creating vacancies in some institutions. These resulted in some of the participants being absorbed by the system. The researcher has since established that about half of the participants are currently employed.

5.2. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The use of qualitative research as a way of discovering meaning is well established. As Schurinck (1998:242) notes, this kind of research has "the potential to describe, make sense of, interpret or reconstruct social interactions…" As an example of this kind of research, this study has explored the perceptions and lived experiences of black qualified unemployed teachers in relation to their specific contexts and the meaning they attach to unemployment. In so doing, however, issues of methodological and conceptual kinds arise.

Some of the limitations arising from a qualitative study include the size of the sample. Although a small sample is appropriate in qualitative research, there are some limitations. Research based on small sample size is limited because it does not permit broad inferences from the views of the participants in the study. Furthermore, the experiences of black unemployed teachers in Moletjie areas cannot be generalized as being representative of other black unemployed teachers in other areas of Limpopo province, let alone other areas in South Africa.

A further issue, with regard to sample selection, concerns whether the decision that the sample would consist of approximately equal number of males and females was made to determine whether gender difference would surface in terms of the experiences of unemployment. The findings showed that unemployment presented particular challenges for male participants as heads of the families. For example, some of the male participants in this study said that unemployment made them feel like failures in life because they failed as heads of the family, being breadwinners and providing for the material and financial needs for their children and wives. However, the negative consequences of unemployment were shared by both genders. No clear resolution can be arrived at in the current study with regard to gender differences as this was not the aim of the study. However, it would be interesting to explore this area further.

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the interview transcripts in this study. This method proved to be an effective way of organising data. However, it should be noted that thematic content analysis is limited in terms of external validity and reliability. The conclusions drawn from the data relied on the subjective judgement of the researcher and the supervisor and, this may have influenced the interpretations of the interviews.

All the participants who participated in this research speak Sepedi as their mother tongue. In the beginning of the interviews, the participants asked the researcher if they could answers in their first language because they would be able to express themselves better. The researcher agreed to their request. However, the interviews questions were asked primarily in English, and for the most part, the participants answered in their mother tongue. Half of the verbatim transcripts were in Sepedi. The researcher herself translated the raw data from Sepedi into English. It is important to highlight that the translation of the interview transcripts from Sepedi to English was difficult and some of the general limitations of translations may have occurred. One of the limitations of translation is the difficulty to capture some of the words and phrases used. This is especially true of some of the proverbs and idioms used by the participants.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research showed that all the participants experienced negative effects of unemployment. For example, reduced self esteem, feelings of failure and disappointment were found to be prevalent in all the participants. The extent of the commonality of their shared experiences of unemployment and what they suggested during the interviews led the researcher to make the following recommendations which might be useful to community psychologists and social workers working in areas where unemployment, particularly amongst professionals, is rife. These include:

- The formation of support groups where unemployed people can be given a safe and non-threatening space to share their feelings, thoughts and experiences about being unemployed. This might be of great help as some of the participants suggested that meeting and talking to other unemployed teachers who are facing and experiencing the same challenges with them would help.
- Organising and facilitating workshops, talks and seminars on issues relating to unemployment and coping strategies taking into account the disappointment unemployment brought to this group of people in particular. These might help the unemployed teachers to deal with the disappointment and frustration that comes with unemployment, particularly after many years of training.

The establishment of community projects and community-based organization such as (non- governmental and non- profit organizations) in rural areas can address the needs of unemployed graduates. These organizations will also help in alleviating unemployment amongst graduates and also serve as a resource where unemployed graduates can volunteer their services by helping other people in the community. Some of the participants said that participating or volunteering in these kinds of organizations helped them and it also gave them a sense of purpose in life. Similarly, by participating in these organisations, some of the participants would be achieving what they wanted, for example, some participants said that making a difference in changing peoples' lives was a satisfying experience.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study explored the experiences of black qualified unemployed teachers from the rural area of Moletjie in Limpopo Province. The research revealed that although participants experienced negative psychological consequences of unemployment, the amount of support they received from the community members eased these negative experiences. Therefore, it might be important if similar studies with black unemployed teachers in urban communities would be undertaken to explore some of the possible similarities and differences between the experiences of unemployment in urban and rural areas. Alternatively, a comparative study between black and white South Africans may be worthwhile, where it may be important to explore whether the experience of unemployment is influenced by the race and location of participants. A further study could also be undertaken with other unemployed professionals who chose a particular career for vocational reasons such as, nurses and priests, in order to investigate whether their experiences of unemployment would be the same with those of teachers.

As it has been noted above, some of the participants are now employed and it could also be interesting to find out more about how they managed to get employed and how they felt after a long period of being unemployed.

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