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Bekwa, Fezile

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Name and Surname: Fezile Euginia Bekwa

Student number: 782340

Signature: 

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

The school environment is increasingly becoming an environment that intensifies social problems that adolescents are confronted by. This coincides with Sharp and Dellis (2010, p. 2) who suggest that "adolescence is a developmental phase of interest when it comes to risk-taking behaviour for several reasons". The school environment which is faced with a myriad of social and health problems is a contributing factor to risk-taking behaviour as this where adolescents are plagued by peer pressure and often bullied into participating in risk taking behaviours. Aggravating the situation is the globally increasing prevalence of media coverage /social media reports of teenage pregnancies, substance abuse, bullying, violence and sexual activities that occur within the school environment.

In this chapter, a background of the study and the problem statement will be discussed. Thereafter, the research question is formulated and the aim and objectives of the study are provided. The chapter also provides an overview of research methodology and concludes with a discussion of key concepts.

1.2. Background of the study

On a daily basis, teachers encounter learners who have experienced a wide variety of stressful events. According to the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000, p. 18) "teachers are expected to provide guidance to learners, to counsel and tutor them if they have any social problems". It is therefore vital for teachers to be able to play these roles to ensure that they provide maximum support to learners. Jansen (2001, p. 244) concurs by stating that "teachers are expected to support and care for learners, to act as a mentor, and to be able to identify and assist them with any learning or social difficulties". The roles, if effective, that teacher's play will better enable learners to cope with any social problem that they are faced with as they will be provided with support. In agreeing with this point, Allen-Meares (2004, p. 278) states that "today's children face an

increasing number of social and health issues, and "every year, one in five children and adolescent experiences the signs and symptoms of a DSM-IV disorder". This is a further indication that there is a need for teachers to be provided with support in assisting with social problems that the learners are faced with.

The problems that are plaguing learners within the school setting are on the rise and teachers are at the forefront in dealing with these issues as not all schools have a social worker or other allied health professionals in their employment. Despite this, there is a paucity of research about social issues occurring within the school environment as well as about how teachers experience these encounters and the support available to both teachers and learners in a school environment. The challenge that teachers find themselves faced with is the rationale of this study as the reality is that teachers are not necessarily equipped to deal with the social issues that learners face.

A qualitative study aimed at investigating teacher preparedness in dealing with learners' social problems was conducted in the Western Cape in 2009 (Abbas, 2009). The purpose of the study was to explore how teachers dealt with learners' social problems. Another concern of the study was to investigate the extent to which pre-service and in-service teacher-training prepared teachers to deal with learners' social problems. The results reflected that teachers dealt with learners' social problems by trial and error and there was no evidence of deliberate planning in identifying learners with social problems. The pre-service teacher training programmes did not equip teachers with the skills to deal with learners' social problems. Although teachers received some form of training at schools, the training was not effective in assisting them.

1.3. Statement of the Problem and Rationale for the Study

The present research was motivated by the researcher's observation of an increase in referrals of adolescent learners facing social problems by schools to the Department of Social Development in the Midrand area. The adolescent learners were referred for various issues that affected them within and outside of the school environment. A number of the cases became referrals as a result of teachers being unable to adequately address or deal with the problems that the learners were faced with.

The researcher thus sought to explore the experiences of teachers in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners. The core function of a teacher is to teach and when they fulfil other roles, they become overloaded with work thus the study aims at creating an awareness of the need to implement school based support services such as school social workers within the school setting and moreover, training policies directed at assisting teachers to deal with social problems facing learners. The study aims furthermore to contribute to the knowledge base of teachers regarding provision of support to learners facing social problems.

1.4. Research question of the study

The overarching research question was: *What are the challenges that teachers experience in dealing with social issues faced by learners in high schools?*

1.5. Aim and Objectives of the study

The primary aim of the study was to explore the experiences of teachers in dealing with social issues faced by learners given the available resources within the educational context.

The objectives of the study in order to reach to the study aim were as follows:

1.5.1 To explore the social issues learners are faced with and teachers are expected to assist learners with.

1.5.2 To discover the challenges teachers are confronted with in assisting learners facing social issues.

1.5.3 To identify the types of support services provided in schools for teachers and learners.

1.5.4 To determine how equipped teachers are in dealing with social issues faced by learners.

1.6. Overview of Research methodology applied

A qualitative research approach that was exploratory in nature was used. "The qualitative approach is used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, with the purpose of exploring, describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant's point of view." (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005 in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2011, p. 64).

Within the context of qualitative research, the collective case study design was employed and enabled the researcher to compare the challenges experienced by teachers among each other and from two different high schools. The collective case study design allows for comparisons to be made between cases and concepts and theories could also be extended and validated (Mark, 1996 in De Vos et al, 2011, p. 322). The study population was teachers employed at two high schools in Diepsloot and Tembisa. The researcher made use of purposive sampling to select the sample of ten teachers, five per school, to participate in the study. A semi-structured interview schedule with open ended questions was used as an instrument to collect the data using in-depth interviews. Data collected were analysed using thematic content analysis.

1.7. Definition of keywords

In the interest of clarity and understanding, certain concepts in this study need to be explained.

1.7.1. Adolescent

According to Gouws and Kruger (1994, p. 4) "it is difficult to define the adolescent phase in terms of chronological age, but it is generally accepted that the onset is usually at age 13 for boys and age 12 for girls until the age of 21". Other definitions of the adolescent life stage may categorise adolescence into three phases namely early adolescence (10-12 years), mid-adolescence (13-16 years), and later adolescence (17-21 years). The current study considers any individual between the ages of 13 and 19 as an adolescent as these are the ages appropriate for Grades 8-12 learners. Although majority of literature would

consider the developmental stage of adolescence to end at the age of 18, this study includes individuals aged 19 as Grade 12 pupils in South Africa are often aged between 18 and 19.

1.7.2. Experience

The South African Pocket Oxford Dictionary (2002, p. 310) defines experience as "the practical contact with and observation of facts or events or knowledge or skill gained over time or an event which leaves an impression on one".

For the purposes of this study experience referred to the teachers' practical contact and personal encounter with learners facing social issues.

1.7.3. Learner

It is clarified by Dawson (2007) that in the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), the term pupil was replaced with learner to provide for a broader context. For the purposes of this study, the term learner refers to a child (below the age of 18 years) attending school regularly for the purpose of learning.

1.7.4. Social problem

Rubington and Weinberg (2003, p. 4) state that sociologists define a social problem as an "alleged situation that is incompatible with the values of a significant number of people who agree that action is needed to alter the situation". In this study a social problem is defined as an issue or circumstances that impact or affects the life of an adolescent learner in any way.

1.7.5. Teacher

In the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) a teacher is defined as an educator. The act states that an educator means any person, excluding a person who is appointed to exclusively perform extracurricular duties, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services, including professional therapy and education psychological services, at a school. The teachers involved in this study were those employed in high schools. They have one or more years of experience and were representative of both genders.

1.8. Outline of the research report

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the study. In Chapter 2, the appropriate literature reviewed will be presented as well as the relevant theoretical framework that underpinned the study.

The research strategy and methodologies employed are discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and in Chapter 4 the analysed data and the interpretation of the findings of the study are presented.

Chapter 5 comprises of a discussion of the main findings in relation to the objectives of the study, final conclusions are made and recommendations are made.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the literature review relevant to the research study. The exploration of this chapter focuses on poverty, HIV and AIDS, teenage pregnancy, child-headed households, substance abuse, gambling, school violence, including bullying and cyber-bullying as social problems most prevalent within the school community. This chapter will as well discuss the theoretical framework that guided the study.

2.2. Adolescence as a development phase

The adolescent developmental phase presents various developmental challenges. Murray Thomas (2005, p. 92) is of the opinion that "according to Erikson's developmental theory adolescence as a developmental phase, is characterised by the child experiencing many physical changes with the arrival of puberty. During the adolescent developmental phase, the adolescent is faced with the psycho-analytical developmental crisis of identity versus identity diffusion, which entails that the adolescent integrates his or her basic drives with their physical and intellectual endowment and opportunities in life." The self-image and social role develop and take on new forms during this phase. Murray Thomas (2005, p. 93) states that adolescents should be able to gain an increasing strength of purpose and understanding of reality as they recognise their own way of mastering reality and dealing with life.

Adolescence is regarded by Carter and McGoldrick (1999, p. 42), as that stage of the human life cycle that ranges from about the age of 13 to 21. In the opinion of Murray Thomas (2005, p. 90) "when referring to an adolescent, one is referring to a child between the ages of twelve to eighteen years, thus including a child within his puberty stage of development. Similarly The Social Work Dictionary (1988, p. 4), defines adolescence as "the lifecycle period between childhood and adulthood, beginning at puberty and

concluding with young adulthood". In keeping with this sentiment, Geldard and Geldard (1999, p. 2) define adolescence to be "the stage in a person's life between childhood and adulthood, which can also be described as the period of human development during which the movement from dependence to independence, maturity and autonomy should be realized". Karpov (2005) suggests that there is a general consensus to viewing the adolescent stage as one that is marred by 'storm and stress.' This period is often characterised by conflicts with parents, mood disruptions and adolescent risk behaviours such as drug use and sexual exploration.

In understanding the adolescent life phase, it is crucial to take into account that there are important developmental changes that occur during this phase that are fundamental to identity formation (Louw, Van Ede & Louw (2005). With reference to the developmental changes experienced by adolescents, it is the view of Geldard and Geldard (1999) that unsuccessful navigation of developmental challenges may lead to disagreeable psychosocial, emotional and behavioural consequences which will subsequently result in the necessity of counselling as alternate coping mechanism to challenges faced.

The researcher is of the opinion that the above definitions are centred on the development stage of the adolescent which deal with challenges that occur as the adolescent prepares to transition to the adulthood phase. Consequently, adolescence is defined as being a development stage that occurs between the ages of 13 and 18. As previously indicated, this study includes individuals aged 19 as Grade 12 pupils in South Africa are often aged between 18 and 19.

2.3. The role of teachers

For the better part of a day, a teacher becomes the guardian of a learner and thus plays an integral part in the development and academic learning of learners. As such, when an adolescent learner is faced with social problems, a teacher is often the first point of entry to providing assistance to the learner. The problem that arises is that not all teachers appropriately equipped to provide assistance as pointed out by Simpson and Mundschenk, (2012). Only a small number of teachers are adequately trained to support students with social, emotional disorders or behavioural problems, or are trained in effective methods and strategies for engaging with these students in an efficient way.

It is evident that a teacher may be expected to do more than just teach, but it becomes difficult to fulfil a role, he or she is not equipped to do. Kauffman and Landrum (2013) suggest that there is a definite need for teachers to obtain specialised support to deal with the rising complexity of problems that learners are faced with as well as the higher demands placed upon the teacher in terms of effective dealing with a wide range of issues. This need suggests an even greater need, which is that of a school based support structure such as a social worker. Having school-based services ensures that early intervention can take place which minimizes the effect that the problem will have on the learner.

Although teachers may not possess the specialised skills required to assist, they do however play a vital role in the process of assisting the learner as it is with them whom the learner spends most of their time with. Therefore a teacher can be a crucial member of a multidisciplinary team as they would be able to provide vital information regarding the behaviour and functioning of the learner when an intervention is being designed (Kauffman & Landrum, 2013).

2.4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that underpins the research study is the ecological approach. McKendrick (1991, p. 155), argues that "the key to understanding human ecology is the notion of interaction. Human ecology focuses on the human ecosystem as the basic unit of analysis. The human ecosystem functions in terms of change and stability with the central questions relating to how humans maintain themselves in continually changing yet restricted surroundings". The ecosystem framework considers factors in the immediate environment of the adolescent (family, school, peer group, community) and the mutual interaction between these factors. This framework is based on the systems theory which explains mutual relationships between people, communities and institutions. The ecological framework thus assists to explain the relationship between the person and the environment.

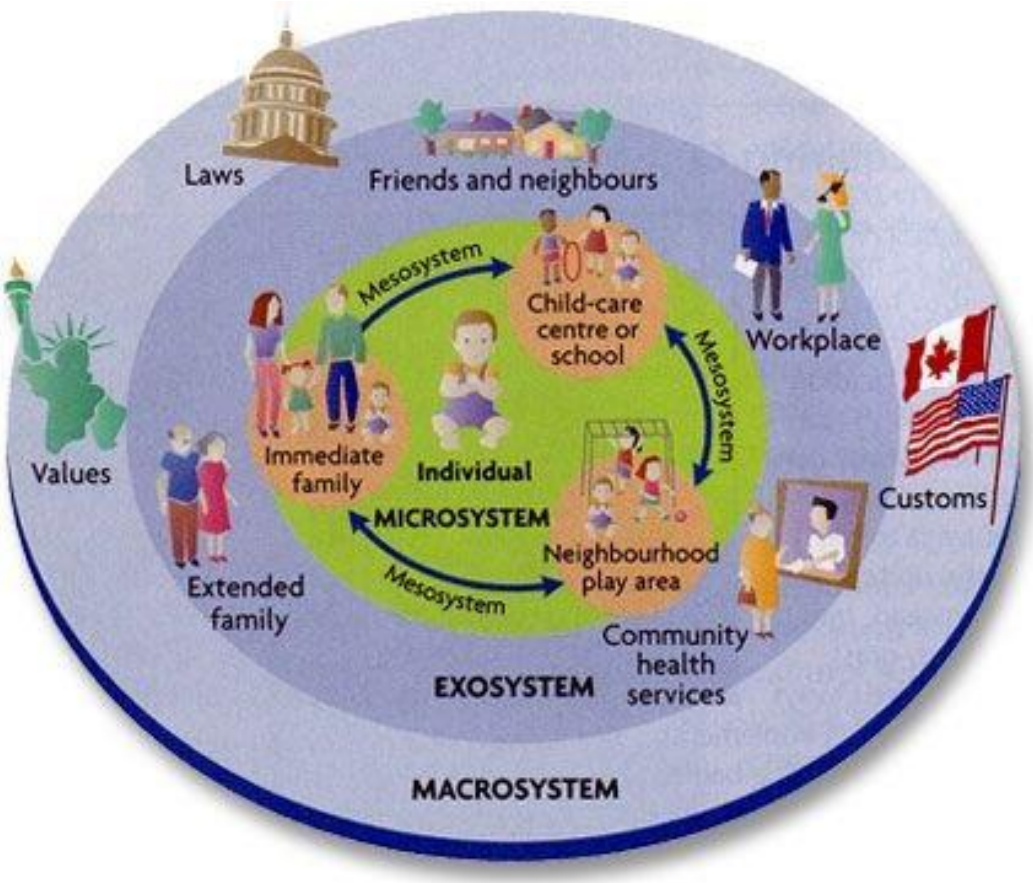


Figure 2.1 Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (adapted from Berk & Roberts, 2009, p. 28)

The ecological model of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) theory attempts to explain the differences in individual's knowledge, development and competencies through the support, guidance and structure of the society in which they live. Bronfenbrenner (1977) developed the ecological systems theory to explain how everything in a child and the child's environment affects how a child grows and develops. He labelled different aspects or levels of the environment that influence children's development, including the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem. The ecological theory defines these five types of systems which contain roles, norms and rules that shape development. The ***microsystem*** refers to the immediate surroundings of the individual. These contexts include the person's family, peers, school, and neighborhood. It is in the microsystem that the most direct interactions with social agents take place; with parents, peers, and teachers, for example. The individual is not merely a passive recipient of experiences in these settings, but someone who actually helps to construct the social settings.

The ***mesosystem*** refers to the relations between the different microsystems or connections between contexts. Some common examples are the connection between family experiences and school experiences, school experiences to church experiences, and family experiences to peer experiences. Allen-Meares (2004) argues that the school plays a vital role in our society as the social issues experienced by communities often spill over into the academic role and function of educators as it may prove difficult to just merely teach if the learners you teach are experiencing one or another social issue. In saying that, learners spend the majority of their day at school and it is the teachers who know the learners to a better degree than most parents, and are able to identify changes that may indicate that the learner is experiencing an issue. The ecological approach does not focus on only one aspect or system but is rather focused on all the systems that form part of an individual's life. The main premise of this approach is focusing on the interactions, behavioural exchanges and relationships that one has with the different systems.

In this study the social issues facing learners and the intervention of teachers occur at different levels but are seen as interconnected. It is always the individual within his society that matters, but individuals cannot be seen in isolation from the system as a whole. The behaviour and actions of the individual influence the family, the extended family and the community. By the same token the actions of the family, the extended family and the value systems of the community in turn influence the behaviour and actions of the individual. Therefore as stated by Coates (1992, p. 20) "in the context of school going children the ecological approach focuses on the environmental forces, denying them the resources necessary for a healthy social functioning and fulfilling existence".

The ***exosystem*** is concerned with the connection between a social setting in which the individual does not have an active role and the individual's immediate context. For example, a student's experience at school may be influenced by the parent's experiences at work. The parents might struggle financially which might mean they are not able to provide financially for the student and it could affect patterns of interaction with the student as they will not be able to see him/her often.

The ***macro-system*** describes the culture in which individuals live. Cultural contexts would include socio-economic status, poverty, and ethnicity. It is assumed that learners who enroll in schools within township areas (Diepsloot and Tembisa) come from low income backgrounds and are from minority groups. The ***chronosystem*** refers to the patterning of

environmental events and transitions over the life of an individual as well as socio historical circumstances. For example, relocating from rural areas to the township to obtain a better standard of education is one transition for learners. An example of socio-historical circumstances would be the increasing opportunities for all children to receive an education in South Africa despite their race.

This model is thus appropriate for the purposes of this study as it will help to better explain and explore the experiences and challenges in terms of the participants who will be part of this study. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979) the interactions between various overlapping ecosystems affect a person significantly. The school is a social system that learners should be able to receive support and assistance from as they experience adolescent issues.

2.5. Social problems most prevalent in school communities

Social problems do not affect only one person, but a group of people in society and the complete system. In the opinion of Zastrow (2000) a social problem comes to exist when it is defined by an influential group to be a condition that affects a collective group and can be solved in a collective manner. It is explained by Rubington and Weinberg (2003) that in defining a social problem, sociologists define a social problem as a circumstance that is contradictory to the norms of a particular society who view social action as the remedial action of the circumstance.

In considering the functioning of the ecological system, it is possible that a social problem in the life of an adolescent learner may present itself in different ways, including the behaviour of the learner in an academic context. The following social problems are most prevalent in schools in the context where the research study has been executed.

2.5.1. Poverty

Poverty and the eradication of poverty is a global issue. However, some countries are more greatly affected than others. Viljoen and Tlabela (2006, p. 6) state that "the problem of poverty is not foreign to South Africa; when the new South Africa government came into power in 1994, one of the immediate priorities was to address the imbalances of the past and in particular, to improve the quality of life of the poor". This was a step towards

poverty alleviation in the country aimed at improving the low standards of living of the poor. Poverty can be defined as "an interlocking and multidimensional phenomenon caused by lack of multiple resources such as employment, food, assets (housing, land), basic infrastructure (water, transport, and energy), health care and literacy" (Patel, 2005, p. 240). More simply, poverty can be described as the inability of an individual to attain the minimum standard of living. As a result of the high unemployment rates in South Africa, many people find themselves living in poverty stricken conditions. Van Wormer (2006, p. 133) indicates that "the weight of poverty falls most heavily on vulnerable groups in every society- women, the elderly, minority groups and children".

In South Africa, poverty is primarily a phenomenon associated with the previously disadvantaged populations, mainly black individuals. Mbuli (2008, p. 3) is of the view that "poverty in South Africa has, inter alia, rural, regional, race, age, gender, illiteracy and unemployment dimensions and that poor people tend to live in large households with many dependants and without access to basic services". In saying that, there is cohesion among authors that in South Africa areas of impoverished habitation are found in rural areas (Mbuli, 2008), which can be defined as areas whereby basic services and resources are inaccessible. The author estimates that on average there are 7 out of 10 people residing in rural areas who are living in impoverished conditions as compared to 3 out of 10 in urban areas who are faced with those same circumstances. It is also noted that despite less than half of South Africa's population occupying rural areas, it is a majority of 7 out 10 who are classified as being poor (Mbuli, 2008).

a) Types of poverty

In defining the phenomenon of poverty, there may be differing definitions as poverty is relative to the people whom it affects. Poverty may however be categorised into four types namely; absolute poverty, relative poverty, chronic and transient poverty in relation to income and affordability as well as capabilities of individuals to achieve basic standards of living. Mbuli (2008, p. 20) defines absolute poverty as "a state in which a person cannot secure his long-term physical survival". This definition refers to the human basic needs as described by Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs in that if a person does not have basic shelter, food or clothing, they may be defined as being in absolute poverty. Alternatively, the relative definition of poverty describes the degree of poverty experienced by a particular household and the measure is that the income of that household falls below that

of others in the same community (Mbuli, 2008). In other words, the relatively poor are those people whose income is below what is referred to as the poverty line, whereby you are unable to purchase adequate food and non-food items to sustain the entire household. An example of relative poverty is illustrated by Mbuli (2008, p. 21) to include "people in the lowest 20% of the income distribution or people earning less than 50% of the mean income".

Chronic poverty is defined as being long-term and having existed over an extended period. This suggests that it is passed on through generations of a particular family (Mbuli, 2008). This is to say that children of parents who are living in poverty will too suffer the same impoverished circumstances. Lastly, transient poverty can be described as occurring as a result of a temporary income shortage whereby the family is temporarily unable to afford basic needs (Mbuli, 2008). This shortfall does not last long as it may be result of the economic climate or rise in food expense.

b) Causes of poverty

It is suggested by McCaston and Rewald (2005) that poverty is caused by a range of factors, which are classified into three categories: immediate causes, intermediate causes and underlying causes. "Immediate causes of poverty are factors directly related to life and death situations: the urgent crises in livelihoods, the shocks which affect the poor more than they afflict the affluent" (Turner, 2005, p. 3). These can include food shortages, disease outbreaks such as the Ebola pandemic and natural disasters such as the drought currently affecting South Africa. Subsequently, people lack income and resources to attain basic necessities such as food, shelter, clothing and acceptable levels of health and education.

Intermediate causes of poverty, the second classification of McCaston and Rewald (2005) are those basic needs which people lack, including basic services, skills, employment opportunities and capacity for productivity. It is here that we see a growth in rural to urban migration as people seek better living and working conditions, however, as the rural population decreases there is an impact in food security as there not many people left to tend to farming activities and many people in rural areas are dependent on subsistence production as a means of survival. The last classification by McCaston and Rewald (2005) is the underlying causes of poverty. This category examines the circumstances that lead

people to suffer from immediate and intermediate causes of poverty. The authors attribute issues of rights, empowerment and identified status as being related to these causes. Another view is that underlying causes of poverty are founded in power structures and relationships among local, national and global groups in society (Turner, 2005).

The houses that are occupied by unemployed people living in poverty stricken conditions are often a symptom of other issues that they experience. Living in corrugated iron shacks is a result of families not being able to afford better quality building materials. It is the opinion of Mbuli (2008, p. 50) that "exposure to poor living conditions may result in the exposure to a number of diseases and illnesses due to lack of insulated protection for the children in poverty-stricken areas". Many of the circumstances of families living in poor conditions mean they are also unable to access quality healthcare services when they develop any illness. Swanepoel and De Beer (2006, p. 6) argue that "an unbalanced diet and prolonged illness leads to physical weakness". Physical weakness then increases the vulnerability to diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria and HIV & AIDS which break down the person's natural immune system. Living in impoverished family and neighbourhood environments is associated with high-risk behaviours thus poverty has an effect on adolescents' mental health and risk-taking behaviour.

2.5.2. HIV prevalence and children made vulnerable by AIDS

HIV and AIDS are social issues that cut across race, class and gender and phenomena that are a global issue, more so in developing and underdeveloped countries. At the end of 2014 it was estimated that 36.9 million people globally were living with HIV and that 2 million people became newly infected with HIV (UNAIDS, 2015). In South Africa, more than 60% of new HIV infections occur among 15- to 25-year olds, with adolescent girls being among the most frequently diagnosed (Call, Riedel, & Hein, 2002).

The number of children affected by HIV and AIDS is increasing as they are related to someone, know or are acquainted to someone who is infected or they themselves are infected. HIV and AIDS are a major contributing factor to the rising number of orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa.

Adolescents are at the age whereby they are sexually curious and therefore Nyachuru-Sihlangu and Ndlovu (1992, p. 225) argue that "we have to come to terms with the reality

of sexual activity among the youth, and as such HIV/AIDS education calls for a progressive understanding of both social and sexuality issues which are vital components in the growth and developmental health of youths and adolescents". The risk behaviours of adolescents not only place them at risk of HIV infection but ultimately lead to possible teenage pregnancy. According to Department of Education (2001a) statistics released on teenage pregnancies and abortions clearly indicate that a large number of school-going adolescents are engaged in unprotected sexual activities, which increases their chances of contracting and spreading a sexually transmitted disease or infection and ultimately HIV/AIDS.

2.5.3. Teenage pregnancy

Sexuality is a developmental milestone that many adolescents struggle with. It is mentioned by Carpenter (1998) that a keen interest in sexual exploration and development occurs during adolescence. Fay and Yanoff (2000) support this as they state that it is during the stage of adolescence that individuals contemplate the sexual behaviours that are gratifying and age appropriate. It is often during the high school phase of the lives of adolescents' that it is reported that there is growing number of sexually active learners.

Adolescent pregnancy has become a growing social issue which has health implications such as exposure to not only sexually transmitted diseases but to HIV and AIDS. It is suggested by Bezuidenhout (2006, p. 43) that "teenage pregnancy is viewed as a social problem in many developed and developing countries." In the South African context, teenage pregnancy is quite a prevalent issue and according to Jean-Jacques and Loeber (2007, p. 301) "parents, teachers and health care professionals should start accepting teenage sexuality as a reality and should formulate a strategy to decrease the number of teenage pregnancies". The researcher is in agreement with this sentiment as engaging in sexual activities has become normalised behaviour among adolescents despite the educational and vigorous awareness campaigns provided by schools and within the communities. Sexual activity has becomes normalised among adolescents as they are constantly exposed to the behaviour through various forms of media as well as a result of living in poverty stricken circumstances whereby adults and children all occupy the same sleeping areas. De Villiers and Kekesi (2004, p. 21) are of the same opinion as they

express that “they are constantly being exposed to sexual titillation on television, in movies, and in popular music on radio and in music video clips.”

Most teenage girls do not plan their pregnancies and more often than not the pregnancy is a result of peer pressure. It is suggested by Nyembezi (2015) that whilst peer pressure is rife among teenagers globally, teenage pregnancy is also on the rise. According to Statistics South Africa (2014, p. 30) about “5,6% of females in the age group 14–19 years were pregnant during the 12 months before they were surveyed. The prevalence of pregnancy increased with age, rising from 0,8% for females aged 14 years, to 11,9% for females aged 19 years”.

Prohibited behaviour is never without any consequences as Cunningham and Boult (1996), indicate that the social consequences that accompany teenage pregnancy include but are not limited to increases in school drop-out rates or interrupted schooling periods, abortion, social exclusion, child neglect, adoption, lack of social security, poverty, repeated pregnancy and negative effects on domestic life.

The researcher has noted that most importantly within the school environment, teenage pregnancy is clouded by stigmatization which leads to learners being bullied or victimised. Teenage mothers are exposed to victimization by other learners as they have to re-enter the schooling system and are not provided with separate facilities that can cater to their needs as young mothers who are also enrolled as learners. Victimisation in social situations often leads to isolation of individuals and as they feel unaccepted or rejected. Aside from being rejected by their peers, Chigona and Chetty (2007, p. 11) state that “stigmatisations tends to be among the causes of teenagers dropping out of school”.

The pressure that the teenage mother faces is due to her having a dual role as a learner and as a mother. Mpanza (2006, p. 13) suggests that “as a parent, the teen mother has responsibilities during the night to care for their child which leads to the academics being neglected”. The researcher posits that in order to address this issue there must be support resources that are accessible within the school environment to assist teenage mothers in achieving a better balance of their dual roles.

2.5.4. Child headed households

It is indicated by Eberson and Eloff (2002) that the disruption of the family institution and death of parents and relatives have created an unprecedented number of destitute and vulnerable children in South Africa. With an increasing high number of infected by HIV and AIDS people comes a high mortality rate which leads to children being orphaned as their parents die at a young age. Children on the Brink (2004, p. 3) stated that "millions of children have been orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS; the most affected region is sub-Saharan Africa, where an estimated 12.3 million children have been orphaned by AIDS".

In many instances, the orphaned children are without any family members to care for them and thus leads to child- headed households. As a result of having to become more responsible for the care for younger siblings, the eldest sibling may drop out of school in a bid to become the breadwinner. This is supported by Children on the Brink (2004, p. 18) as it reports that "many adolescents have less access to school as they have to assume new responsibilities for supporting the family. This in turn reduces their chances of getting adequate education and training, which they need in order to get a stable and secure job." HIV/AIDS results in not only the loss of parents but also in a loss of income for the household which threatens the security of the family.

The other option available to orphaned children is to be legally placed in alternative care, i.e. foster care with family members or non- family members. Alternatively they may be placed in child and youth care centres. Foster care is described by the Children's Act as the placement of children in alternative care by order of the Children's Court (Children's Act 38 of 2005). The court processes involved in legal placement of orphaned learners may result in absence from school and being a foster child may result in stigmatisation. With the loss of a parent, many male children have to assume the role of being the 'man of the house', this is often not an easy role to fulfil and places paramount pressure on these children.

The absence of a father in the upbringing of a child has negative consequences. Mtimkulu, (2006, p. 39) argues that "the absence of the father means that children are unable to develop properly on many levels; psychologically, materially, emotionally, cognitively and physically". Adolescents are also more severely influenced by the absence of a father

figure than younger children as at this life stage boys are dependent on their fathers to teach how to be a well-respected man and girls require their fathers to assist them in manoeuvring the life of dating as they may wish to find a partner with the same characteristics as their father. If these children become double orphans as a result of losing their mothers they will be left with no support system and guidance in navigating adolescence and later on adulthood. Meyer (2013, p. 4) supports this argument by stating that "by having no loving and caring adult in the house, children also lose a sense of stability. The result of having no adult role model in the house – especially as a child who develops into adolescence – means that a child loses an opportunity to develop a stable identity. This unstable identity causes children to 'float' around senselessly, not prioritising education and not developing meaningful stable relationships." With identity formation and instability comes the desire to experiment as well as conform which leads to various social problems faced by adolescents such as substance use.

2.5.5. Substance use

Despite substance use on school premises is prohibited, adolescents find ways of smuggling substances into schools. Due to heightened peer influence and a tendency towards risk taking behaviour being normal during this developmental stage experimentation with substances during this period is common. Risk factors, such as peer influence, may be more powerful during adolescence. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Fifth Edition (DSM-5) has opted to using the term substance use disorder rather than the terms substance abuse and substance dependence. According to the DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) a diagnosis of substance use disorder is based on evidence of impaired control, social impairment, risky use, and pharmacological criteria. Furthermore, substance use disorders are defined as mild, moderate, or severe to indicate the level of severity, which is determined by the number of diagnostic criteria met by an individual.

Adolescents abuse a variety of substances, both legal and illegal. Legally available drugs include alcohol, prescribed medications, inhalants (fumes from glues, aerosols, and solvents) and over- the counter cough, cold, sleep, and diet medications. Substance abuse is defined by Nault (1997, p. 322) as the "harmful, non-medical use of mind altering substances which may lead to personality and behavioural problems." Substance abuse is

thus the use of a drug that will alter one's mood and as a result create adverse effects on that individual's life. According to the DSM- 5 (APA, 2013), substance use disorders occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically and functionally significant impairment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home. Substance abuse is thus the result of drug use that causes changes to the user's behaviour and may result in physical, psychological or social harm. The Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act 70 of 2008 (2009, p. 9) defines substance abuse as "sustained or sporadic excessive use of substances and includes any use of illicit substances and the unlawful use of substances."

The media plays a big role in today's society and more media platforms are utilised in advertising of addictive substances such as alcohol and tobacco. According to Colett (2004, p. 2) "learners are exposed to drugs on a daily basis. They watch alcohol and drug commercials on television and in magazines and they see adult family member smoking and drinking." Legal drugs are portrayed in advertisements in a positive light as they are often associated with wealth and success which sends the wrong message to young people who are easily influenced and will partake in drug use as a means of fitting in with peers who are involved in such activities. It is the opinion of Le Roux (2000, p. 91) that "the learner strives to be accepted by the peer group. The learner wants to fit in and feel part of the peer group. It is important for the learner to conform to the peer group. The abuse of drugs within the peer group readily leads to drug abuse by the learner as a result of peer group pressure." This vicious pattern of peer pressure leads to an increase in the number of learners who abuse substances. It is emphasised by Van Niekerk (1998, p. 36) that "the use of illegal drugs are taking on epidemic proportions among the South African youth."

The effects of substance abuse are far reaching than just affecting the academic achievements of a learner. Drugs affect learners psychologically, physiologically and emotionally (Department of Education, 2000) and according to Zastrow (2000) schools and teachers are still struggling to handle this social problem. Agreeing with this is a study conducted by Finn and Willert (2006) which revealed that a very limited number of teachers had received training in dealing with drug abuse or had the necessary knowledge to deal with learners addicted to drugs. It is the researcher's opinion that this is an indication of the lack in resources within schools with regards to assisting learners with the social problems that they faced with. Weinberg (1971, p. 102) is of the opinion that "the solution may lie in exposing teachers to the social workers and other personnel who

specialise in working with drug addiction". Weinberg (1971, p. 103) also indicates that "it is important that drug education be incorporated into the curricula of many colleges and universities that train teachers so that they are able to handle these social problems before they go into the classroom".

The researcher is of the opinion that this suggestion is in fact in line with the prevention and early intervention levels of Social Work which are both aimed at reducing negative effects on individuals. Pillay (2000, p. 75) supports this argument by stating that "if teachers are trained to identify learners with drug abuse problems, it can serve as an early preventative measure". This is concurred by Meers, Werch, Hedrick and Leppers (1995) as they found that teachers were faced with a challenge when dealing with learners engaging in substances, as they were not appropriately trained to assist the learners. In a study conducted by Van Hout and Connor (2008, p. 87) among teachers in Ireland, it was found that "teachers were not trained to recognise the signs of drug and alcohol use". In agreeing with Pillay (2000) and Meers et al. (1995), the authors suggest that it is a requirement for teachers to be trained, equipped and educated on drug use among learners as well as early identification so as not to impact on the academic practices of the learner.

There seems to be a consensus in the literature in need for teacher training regarding dealing with substance use among learners. The researcher thus draws to the conclusion that in beginning to combat substance abuse as well as other social problems among learners, teachers have to be appropriately and adequately trained in early identification of social problems in order to appropriately assist. The schools need to implement protocols that will guide teachers in ensuring that learners are appropriately referred to the correct support systems and assisted accordingly.

2.5.6. Gambling

There is vast literature that indicates that adolescents are involved in risky behaviours such as those mentioned in this work, however, it was not until a few researchers began examining prevalence rates of gambling behaviour among adolescents in the late 1980s, that problem gambling in this age group became widely documented. This is highlighted by Griffiths (2003) who indicates that the notion of adolescent gambling is gradually becoming an apparent problem. Collins and Barr (2001) define gambling as an activity whereby two or more parties place at risk something of value (the stakes) in the hope of

winning something of greater value (the prize) where the outcome depends on the outcome of events which are unknown to the participants at the time of the bet (the result).

The DSM-5 (APA, 2013) now refers to the most serious form of gambling problems as disordered gambling. The new DSM-5 diagnostic criteria incorporating nine items, has proposed a level of severity of gambling disorder. Derevensky (2012) pointed out that the most prevalent gambling activities among adolescents typically include sports betting (primarily with peers, card playing, lottery purchases (scratch tickets are significantly more popular than lottery draws), dice and board games with family and friends, games of personal skill with peers, and bingo.

Adolescent gambling is regarded as deviant, because it is illegal for youth younger than 18 to gamble in many countries. It is however noted that some adolescents view gambling in a positive light and do not perceive the act to be deviant (Calado, Alexandre, & Griffiths, 2014). The positive perceptions may stem from the fact that some parents do not discourage the behaviour. This notion is evident in that Felsher, Derevensky, and Gupta (2003) reported that parents tend to have positive attitude towards gambling and enable their children to have access to gambling by purchasing scratch tickets, lottery draws and sports tickets for their children. The problem of gambling among adolescents seems to exist simultaneously with the practice of other problem behaviours. In the township communities such as those where the research study was conducted, adolescents are often seen partaking in gambling activities where the prize is more often than not; substances of some sort. Lynch, Maciejewski, and Potenza (2004) point out that the onset of gambling behaviour may be accompanied by more severe psychiatric problems, particularly substance use disorders. A recent examination conducted by Derevensky and Gilbeau (2015) focusing on the experiences and relationship of adolescents and gambling over the past 25 years, it was found that male adolescents in comparison to their female counterparts are more likely to have a gambling problem. It was also found that the inception of the gambling behaviour occurs within the family home.

In South Africa to assist individuals who experience gambling-related problems, there is The National Responsible Gaming Programme (NRGP) which was founded in June 2000. The programme is described by Collins and Barr (2001) as a public/private sector initiative, being the only one of its kind in Africa and is acknowledged internationally to be exceptionally well funded and among the most comprehensive in the world. The NRGP

(NGRP Handbook, 2001) recognizes four different forms of gambling. The first are social (recreational) gamblers who are described as those who gamble on social occasions with friends or colleagues. The second are frequent gamblers (also called heavy or serious gamblers), for whom gambling is an important part of their lives and would be missed if they could not engage in it

The third form of gamblers is problem gamblers who are described as those who spend too much time and money gambling. The last form is compulsive and pathological gamblers who have a psychiatric disorder diagnosable by strict criteria.

2.5.7. School violence

Unruly behaviour and aggression exhibited by teenagers in the school community can give rise to safety issues not only for other learners but also for teachers and the consequence may be the disruption of the learning process. According to Prinsloo and Neser (2007, p.47), "school violence is regarded as any intentional physical or non-physical (verbal) condition or act resulting in physical or non-physical pain being inflicted on the recipient of that act while the recipient is under the school's supervision". The occurrence of violence and crime in South African schools is of a dire nature (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011), as it not only puts those involved in the fight in harm's way but also affects other learners and staff members present in the school community. In his study of school violence in South African schools, Burton (2008) found that about 1.8 million of all pupils between Grade 3 and Grade 12 (15.3%) had experienced violence in one form or another. Burton (2008) found that 12.8% of the learners had been threatened with violence; 5.8% had been assaulted; 4.6% had been robbed; and 2.3% had experienced some form of sexual violence at school. The above findings clearly show that learners are victims of school violence because it takes place in the classroom or on the school grounds.

With the occurrence of school violence emerges issues of safety and if individuals in the school community feel that their safety is in jeopardy, the result will be a non- teaching and learning environment as people strive to protect themselves. Substance use is greatly attributed as a contributing factor to school violence, together with other factors that create an unfavourable teaching and learning environment (Zulu, Urbani, van der Merwe & van der Walt, 2004).

In conceptualising school violence Furlong and Morrison (2000) regard the behaviour as being inclusive of illegal and violent actions that impede on both the development and performance of learners as well as destabilizing the school environment. This suggests that violent incidents cause disruptions to the academic progression of learners. Correspondingly, school violence is defined by de Wet (2007, p. 674) as "constructs that involves both criminal acts and aggression in schools, which inhibits developments and learning as well as harming the school environment".

Alternatively, school violence according to Hagan (2000, p. 5) is "the exercise of power over others in school-related settings by some individual, agency or social process". The definition provided by Hagan (2000, p. 5) appears to be congruent with de Wet (2007) as the author states that "school violence encompasses behaviour that disrupts the safe learning environment of a classroom or school". As a result being exposed to apartheid South Africans are accustomed to the use of violence and Hamber (1999, p. 114) supported this argument when he explained that "South Africans have a long history of socially sanctioning the use of violence to solve problems". An example of violence occurring in the school context in South African history is the 1976 Soweto uprisings whereby students protested against Bantu education which enforced a regulation requiring that one-half of all high-school classes be taught in Afrikaans. As a result of their strike action, the protesting students caused damage to schools and learners as well as educators who were not part of the strike action were attacked in an attempt to inhibit the functioning of schools. School violence encompasses any violent behaviour that occurs on school premises and one of the most common forms of violence that occurs within the school environment is bullying.

2.5.7.1. Bullying

Bullying is a growing phenomenon in the school environment as learners experience peer pressure to be involved in deviant behaviours. Bullying according to Brendtro (2001, p. 47) is "an act that strives to ridicule a person and to make that person the object of scorn and derision". In contrast Besag (1989, p. 4) has defined bullying as "repeated attacks – physical, psychological, social and verbal – by those in a position of power, which is formally or situationally defined, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain and gratification". According to Bullock and Wong-Lo (2011) and Vieno, Gini, and Santinello (2011) over the past two decades, bullying has

received detailed attention by professionals due to its increasing occurrence and the negative emotional and health effects it has on adolescents.

Bullying can thus be categorised into emotional bullying and physical bullying. The former is a deliberate attempt to hurt someone on an emotional level whilst the latter includes kicking, punching and other physically harmful behaviours. According to Ang and Goh (2010, p. 388) "in recent years, bullying has evolved from face-to-face methods to virtual methods known as cyber-bullying". It is imperative that one should consider the new prevalence of bullying that occurs on social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter known as cyber-bullying as it is mainly adolescents that become victims.

In order for bullying to occur in any form, it is often the result of an imbalance in power whereby the bully has power over the victim. According to Twyman Saylor, Taylor and Comeaux (2010) the effects of both bullying and cyber bullying have comparable negative consequences on the bully and the victim. Consequences can have a psychological impact which may lead to emotional distress and the adolescent turns to use of substances as a coping mechanism.

2.5.7.2. Cyber-bullying

High school learners are prominent users of social networking sites as they use these platforms to share their interests and keep up with the latest trends as well have online friendships some of which are based on real life friendships. Although cyber-bullying can affect a person of any age Twynman et al (2010, p. 195), state "adolescent cases are predominantly reported". Most adolescents are driven by social pressures to join these social networking sites which lead to occurrences of cyber-bullying. According to Burnham, Wright, and Houser (2011, p. 2) "the transmission of cruel and embarrassing texts and pictures between adolescents have been on the increase in recent years and form part of cyber-bullying".

In defining cyber-bullying behaviours Hinduja and Patchin (2010) indicate that that they are parallel to traditional bullying with the exception of the use of electronic media to bully victims. Jacobson and Forte (2011, p. 275) describe cyber-bullying as "bullying that takes place through the use of electronic media which includes e-mail, instant messaging, mobile phones, social networking sites and video and online gaming".

2.6. Conclusion

In the transforming society we live in today, the role of a teacher in its traditional sense has changed as their responsibilities are expanding beyond the class room. According to Lai-Yeung (2014, p. 36) "teachers have multiple roles and apart from subject teaching, teachers are entrusted with many responsibilities nowadays". To fulfil their roles professionally, teachers need to be competent in their responsibilities towards their students inside and outside the classroom. It is therefore an increasing need for teachers to be appropriately equipped to assist learners with any problems that they face whether they stem from inside or outside of the school environment. It is clear from the review of literature above that there are ever increasing problems that adolescents have to face. Learners are exposed to environments riddled with potential adversities which pervade their lives, adding to the challenges inherent in their developmental stage. They spend a significant time in school and therefore it is an appropriate context to explore the experiences of teachers when dealing with adolescent learners facing social problems presently within the school environment.

In the next chapter the research strategy and methodology that were utilised in undertaking the study will be presented in detail.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the research strategy and methodology applied in this study. This includes a discussion on the research approach and design, the research population, sample and sampling techniques employed. The research instrument, pre-testing thereof, the methods of data collection as well as data analysis are explained. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the limitations of the study and the ethical considerations that guided the study.

3.2. Research Approach

The research approach used in this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature. Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 95), explain that "the qualitative approach is used to answer questions about the complex nature of phenomena, with the purpose of exploring, describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant's point of view. The qualitative researcher seeks thus a better understanding of complex situations". In explaining exploratory research, Blaikie (2000, as citied in De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011, p. 95) states that "exploratory research is conducted to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual. Exploratory research is the most advantageous where little work has been done, few definitive hypotheses exist and little is known about the nature of the phenomenon." According to Silverman (2000, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), qualitative research tends to emphasise the dynamic, holistic and individual aspects of human experiences by attempting to capture those aspects in their entirety, within the context of those who are experiencing them.

The study seeks to answer the questions of how equipped teachers are in dealing with social issues faced by learners, what support services are available in schools to support learners facing social issues as well as what support services are available in schools to assist teachers in dealing with the social issues faced by learners?

3.3. Research design

According to Leedy (1997, p. 94) a research design is the plan for the study, providing the overall framework for collecting the data. The research design was conducted in the form of case studies so that "comparisons can be made between cases and concepts and theories can also be extended and validated" (Mark, 1996, as citied in De Vos et al., 2011, p. 322). The collective case study enabled the researcher to compare the experiences of teachers in dealing with social issues faced by learners in high school. A case study research design was selected to facilitate an investigation in order to gain an in-depth insight into how the research participants experienced in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners.

Mouton (2001) points out that the main strengths of a case study design are its high construct validity, in-depth insights and the opportunity to establish good rapport with research participants. With regards to disadvantages, Lindegger (2002, as cited in Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002) also notes the possible lack of generalisability of results, problems with the validity of information, difficulty in testing causal links, and non-standardisation of measurement. In addition, he points out that analysis is time-consuming. Mouton (2001), on the other hand, is concerned with the possibility of researcher bias and lack of rigour in the analysis. It is important to note that the purpose of this study was to provide a rich and detailed account of the research participants' experiences during the research process within a specific context rather than to generalise the findings. The study could, however, provide insight into other similar cases. To limit possible researcher bias and to ensure that the data was portrayed accurately, member checking took place. This means that in order to ensure validity of the interviews used, data and tentative interpretations of this study were taken back to the participants during the study to check with them if their responses were correctly captured. All the participants interviewed confirmed as correct their responses used in the study. On the basis of checking with participants if their responses were captured correctly, the researcher was confident that the study had high internal validity.

3.4. Study population, sample and sampling procedure

According to Strydom (as cited in De Vos et al., 2005, p. 204), population refers to the 'individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics or asset of entities that represent all the requirement of interest to the researcher'. In addition, Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2005, p. 52) also define population as "the study objects and state that it consists of individuals, groups, organizations, human products and events or the conditions to which they are exposed." For the purpose of this study, population refers to teachers employed at a high school in Diepsloot and at a high school in Tembisa.

The researcher made use of purposive sampling to select the sample of ten teachers, five per school, to participate in the study. Creswell (2007, p. 125) states that "this form of sampling is used in qualitative research and that participants and sites that are selected can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem of the study. The selection process of participants must be purposeful as the participants must be able to make meaningful contributions towards the findings". The participants comprised of teachers who have one or more years of experience and were representative of both genders. In support of this notion is Barbour (2008, p. 52) who states that "in purposive sampling, the researcher selects interviewees or focus group participants by virtue of characteristics that are thought by the researcher to be likely to have some bearing on their perceptions and experiences". The participants of this study were purposefully selected as they are employed in schools whereby many of the learners are referred to the Department of Social Development in the Midrand Office.

In recruiting participants, the researcher gained access to the teachers through the principals of the respective schools. The research topic and criteria required for participants was explained to the principals and the researcher was invited to present the study to teachers. Voluntary participation was emphasized to the teachers and those interested indicated that they wanted to participate in the study. Interview times were then set with the participants who met the set criteria as mentioned above. Participants were interviewed during school holidays and after school hours only during the term, thus no teaching was affected.

3.5. Research instrument

An interview schedule (Appendix D) was used as the research instrument during the study. Greef (2011, p. 352) is of the opinion that "with a semi-structured interview schedule the researcher will have a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule, but the interview will be guided rather than dictated by the schedule". The researcher ensured that the interview schedule was brief and clear so that participants could easily understand and they were able to freely express their experiences. The semi-structured interview schedule allowed the researcher to probe and receive detailed responses from participants. The questions included in the interview schedule were self-developed as they were deemed to be sufficient to elicit answers that would allow the researcher to explore the issue under research.

3.6. Pre-testing of the research tool

Researchers need to conduct an initial test of the research tool to determine if it will be appropriate for the research study. Neuman (2006, p. 54) describes a pre-test as a "preliminary measure which is utilized prior to administration of the final version of data collection tool." The purpose of a pre-test is thus to help identify shortcomings and faults of the research instrument. The researcher conducted a pre-test in order to enhance reliability and validity of the research tools. The pre-test was conducted with a participant who did not form part of the final study. The pre-test participant was subjected to the same inclusion criteria as the participants of the final study. One limitation surfaced from the pretesting, the participant appeared to be unsure of what bio-psychosocial effects were with regards to the effects that social problems had to learners. As such the researcher was able to make adjustments to the question so that it would be clearer to the participants.

3.7. Method of data collection

The researcher collected data by conducting individual face to face interviews with participants. According to Greef (2005, as citied in De Vos et al., 2011, p. 360) interviews have "particular strengths. They are a useful way of getting large amounts of data quickly

and are especially an effective way of obtaining depth in data". The author goes on to further state that, "interviews, however also have limitations as they involve personal interaction and cooperation is therefore essential." It is also indicated by the author that "participants may be unwilling to share, and the researcher may ask questions that do not elicit the desired responses from participants". This was evident in the research study as participants often lost track of their thoughts and mentioned information that was not necessarily applicable to the questioned asked. In collecting data, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews which took place in the school community. It was thought beneficial for the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews at the schools as this assisted the researcher in getting the feel of the school environment and to allow the teachers to narrate their experiences in their natural work environment.

The average time for interviews was twenty minutes with the shortest interview being a minimum of seven minutes and the longest was approximately an hour. The interviews were audio recorded, after gaining consent from participants, to avoid data loss and this enabled the researcher to accurately capture the participants' accounts. Issues of confidentiality, voluntary participation and the purpose of the study were also discussed with each participant.

3.8. Method of Data analysis

The study employed thematic content analysis, which according to Creswell (2009) is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data. The following steps according to Creswell (2009) depict the process of data analysis.

3.8.1. Preparing and organizing the data

The first step was planning for recording of data which entailed the formulation of an interview schedule that was utilized during interviews and was audio recorded with the consent of the participants. This was followed by the actual collection of data and preliminary analysis of data. The first step in qualitative data analysis is, as stated by Creswell (2009) to plan to record data in a systematic way, during the actual process of data collection.

As the data recording was done using electronic media, the data was transcribed into text format. Reading and writing memos was the next step and the researcher listened to and studied the material recorded and took notes where necessary with the pursuit of coding the data and making sense of it. This was achieved by writing memos, in particular, analytical memos which as described by Kreuger and Neuman (2006, p. 440) are "short phrases, ideas or key concepts that researchers write to themselves about the coding process". The researcher transcribed the audio-taped, semi-structured interviews and interpreted where necessary as the participants were given the opportunity to express themselves in their mother tongues. The vernacular language answers were later translated into English and then analysed.

3.8.2. Reducing the data

The second step is generating categories and coding data. During this stage the researcher identified the main themes in the data that form a connection among the participants together and then categorized or coded them accordingly. Thereafter, the researcher followed the process of testing emergent understandings and searching for alternative explanations. The researcher then made comparisons of the data as a means of exploring alternative explanations. The researcher subsequently searched for underlying issues or meanings and explored possible explanations and connections among the collected data, noting similarities and differences in order to obtain an extensive understanding of the data. Lastly, is the process of interpreting and developing typologies. This is stage that the researcher attempted to make sense of the data and analyzed the meanings of it. This was achieved by developing typologies or systems as noted by Creswell (2009, p. 150) that "it is a very useful aid when making sense of qualitative data". The purpose of interpretation is to make meaningful conclusions and recommendations.

3.8.3. Visualizing, representing and displaying the data

Presenting the data is the final stage and analyzed data and findings are presented in the following chapter of the research report.

3.9. Trustworthiness of the study

In a qualitative study, according to Golafshani (2003), reliability and validity are conceptualised as trustworthiness. Qualitative research as stated by Winter (2000) is concerned with the meanings and personal experiences of individuals, groups and sub-groups. To achieve research that is of good quality, the data generated during qualitative research must be a true and accurate representation of the research participant's voice.

3.9.1. Credibility and dependability

Trustworthiness implies credibility and dependability which in turn refers to the authenticity of a study. Poggenpoel (1998) defines credibility as the degree of confidence that the researcher has about the truth of the research findings. The study was made valid and credible by recording each session which provided an accurate account of the interviews conducted. The use of narrative notes and audio recordings enhanced credibility of the study. Participants were allowed to obtain a copy of their own transcribed interview for perusal in order to establish and confirm accuracy of information. They were also allowed to comment on the interpretations made by the researcher. Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 277) refer to this as "member checking which allows the researcher to go back to the participants in order to verify authenticity of information". This made the data dependable and enhanced credibility as participating participants were able to confirm or disapprove the interpretations made by researcher. Merriam (2009, p. 13) supports this notion as the author states that "credibility deals with the question of how research findings match reality and how congruent the findings were with reality". To ensure dependability all data, including transcribed interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study.

3.9.2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of a study can be transferred to other contexts or settings (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). To enhance transferability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research. Regarding qualitative studies, Babbie and Mouton (2001, p.

277) further state that “the obligation for demonstrating transferability rests on those who wish to apply it to the receiving context (the reader of the study)”. Utilisation of purposive sampling ensures maximisation of specific information being transferred to other contexts Guba and Lincoln (2005).

3.9.3. Confirmability

Confirmability on the other hand refers to the extent to which the findings of the study can be confirmed or corroborated by others to reduce the researcher’s biases. Supporting this argument are Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 278) who state that “confirmability pertains to the degree to which the findings are the product of the focus of inquiry and not the biases of the researcher.” As a means of enhancing confirmability the researcher documented the procedures for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study.

3.10. Ethical considerations

When conducting research, there are ethical considerations that must be adhered to. The researcher was therefore ethically obliged to protect participants. According to Mertens (1999, p. 23) “ethical considerations in research play an integral part of research planning and implementation process”. For the purpose of this study the ethical principles considered will be described below.

3.10.1. Participation and withdrawal

It is stated by Rubin and Babbie (2005) that participation in a research study should always be voluntary and no one should be forced to participate in a project. Participants were able to choose whether to partake in this study or not. Participants who volunteered to be part of this study were able to withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. They were also afforded the opportunity to refuse to answer any questions that they did not want to answer and still remain in the study.

3.10.2. Informed Consent

Informed consent is required to conduct the study in a professional way (Strydom, 2005a) and this is connected to the fact that participation should always be voluntary (Babbie, 2010). The participants were thoroughly informed of the way in which the study would be conducted and the fact that a report would be compiled on the findings. Participants were also informed that the interviews would be recorded and that research data will be stored for a period of two years after any publication arising from the study or six years after completion of the study if there are no publications. Participants were also given forms of consent to sign (See Appendices B and C).

Patton (2002, p. 407) states that "participants must be aware that they would be at liberty to withdraw from the investigation at any time." Participants of this study were made aware that they had the right to withdraw their consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

3.10.3. Permission to conduct research study

Prior to commencement of the study, the researcher obtained ethical clearance protocol number SW/2/16/3/1(Appendix E) from the Witwatersrand University Departmental Human Research Ethics Committee. The researcher obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) (Appendix F) to conduct the research study within schools. Permission to conduct the research at the school was obtained verbally from the principals of the two schools after the scope and nature of the research study had been explained. After obtaining the necessary permission, the participants were invited for an interview during which the nature of the research study was clearly explained and they were made aware of the risks and benefits of the study. They also received a participant information sheet (Appendix A) explaining the research in full, including the aims and methods that would be employed.

3.10.4. Avoidance of harm

In conducting research, emotional harm is more difficult to predict and therefore the consequences may be serious or far-reaching (Strydom, 2005a. No physical harm was experienced in this study. Participants were informed prior to the study as well as within

the information sheet that if the study affects them either psychologically or emotionally, referral for counselling services would be made available to them.

3.10.5. Publication of findings

The research participants were informed that after the research had been done; the researcher would compile a report that would reflect the findings from the study (Strydom, 2005a). The data gathered and analyzed was recorded and displayed in the written format of a research report. The Gauteng Department of Education and the library at the University of Witwatersrand will have access to the published report.

3.10.6. Violation of privacy and confidentiality

The researcher respected the participants' privacy by not sharing the matters or issues about the participants which are not intended to be known or observed by other people. Confidentiality was upheld by keeping agreed upon content between the researcher and participant and limiting other people's access to the participants' private information. Babbie (2001, p. 472) believes that "confidentiality implies that only the researcher and possibly a few of his or her staff should be aware of the identity of participants." Every effort was made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information that is obtained in connection with this study.

3.10.7. Anonymity

Observing anonymity in a research study alludes to participants' remaining unknown. Neuman (2000) refers to anonymity as protection of the identity of an individual. Anonymity of identification in this study was secured by not revealing the real names of the participants in the findings and publications. Pseudonyms were utilized in the interview transcripts to ensure that the real names of participants do not appear in documents. Participants were also assured of anonymity of data (Appendix C) as it was indicated that recorded data would stored in a secure location with restricted access. The researcher also ensured that anonymity would be maintained by removing any identifying information in the transcribed data.

3.11. Summary

This chapter outlined the research strategy and methodology employed during the study. The limitations of the study and the ethical considerations that guided the study were also highlighted. In Chapter 4 the analysed data will be presented, interpreted and discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings of the study in response to the overarching research question which is how do teachers deal with learners' social problems? The profile of the participants is presented and the most prevalent social problems are indicated. The themes drawn from the data are presented and discussed in relation to the objectives of the study.

4.2 Participant profile

Prior to the interview each participant was asked standard demographic questions on gender, age range, professional position, as well as duration of service. This information is tabulated in Table 4.1 the profile of participants in terms of age, gender, teaching experience of each participant as well as any other role they play within the school community is presented.

Table 4.1 ***Profile of Participants (N=10)***

Participants	**Age**	**Gender**	**Teaching experience**	**Other role**
1	44 years	Female	17 years	
2	43 years	Male	4 years	
3	50 years	Female	22 years	
4	45 years	Male	16 years	
5	44 years	Female	11 years	
6	30 years	Female	Less than 2 years but more than 1 year	Member of the School Based Support Team
7	46 years	Male	8 years	
8	50 years	Female	24 years	Member of the Disciplinary committee
9	46 years	Female	Less than 2 years	Member of the bereavement committee and the sports committee
10	50 years	Male	7 years	Member of the bereavement committee

Ten teachers in total were interviewed, with five coming from a high school in Diepsloot and the other five coming from a high school in Tembisa. The participants comprised of teachers who have one or more years of experience and were representative of both genders with four male and six female participants. Two of the participants had less than

two years of experience in education whilst five participants had more than ten years of experience in education. Four of the participants indicated that they played an extended role served on a committee within the school community. The committee's identified were; Disciplinary committee, bereavement committee and the sports committee.

In gathering data, several themes emerged from the narratives as indicated in Table 4.2. Following the collection of data, the researcher focused on the analysis of the data that was gathered and themes as well as sub-themes were formulated regarding the findings. Each theme and sub-theme will be discussed in detail. The major themes identified are presented as follows:

Table 4.2: ***Themes and sub-themes emerging from study***

Themes	**Sub-themes**
Theme 1: Social problems most prevalent in school communities	Sub-theme: Child-headed households Sub-sub-theme: Orphaned learners Sub-theme: Teenage pregnancy Sub-theme: Substance abuse Sub-theme: Unemployment/poverty Sub-theme: Bullying
Theme 2: Causes of social problems	Sub-theme: Unemployment/poverty
Theme 3: Indicators of social problems	Sub-theme: Behaviour Sub-theme: Lack of uniform Sub-theme: Academic performance
Theme 4: Perception of teachers' role in dealing with social problems presented by learners	Sub-theme: Provision of intervention
Theme 5: Experience when attempting to assist learners facing social problems	Sub-theme: Barriers prohibiting provision of assistance
Theme 6: Challenges experienced when assisting learners facing social problems	Sub-theme: Lack of parental involvement Sub-theme: Lack of training
Theme 7: Effects of social problems on learners	Sub-theme: Effect on academic performance Sub- theme: Bio psychosocial effects
Theme 8: Support services	Sub-theme: Services available within the school community Sub-theme: Procedure for access to services Sub- theme: Perception of the effectiveness of services Sub-theme: External services utilized by school community Sub- theme: Role of parents Sub- theme: Planning and development of

	support services
Theme 9: Training/policies	Sub-theme: Training received to deal with social problems Sub-theme: Procedure for contravention of school policy

4.3. Social problems most prevalent in school communities

There are several social problems that emanated from the findings In Table 4.2 the types of problems identified as well as the number of participants who indicated the problem will be presented.

Table 4.3: ***Types of social problems***

Social problems	**Number of participants**
Child-headed households	6
Orphaned learners	4
Single parent households	3
Rape/ sexual harassment	2
Teenage pregnancy	4
Prostitution	1
Crime	1
Bullying (physical)	6
HIV/AIDS	1
Unemployment/ poverty	4
Drug use/ substance use	4
Behavioural misconduct	2
Violence/ school violence	2
Gangsterism	3
Gambling	1
Witchcraft	1

The most common prevalent social issues arising from the findings are discussed below.

4.3.1. Child-headed households

Six participants mentioned child headed households as being a social issue faced by learners in the school community, indicating that this social problem is on the rise, particularly in communities such as those utilized in the study. A child-headed household is usually regarded as one where children or orphans live without a resident adult guardian and the head of the household is 18 years or younger (Shisana & Simbayi, 2002). It was noted that the social issues of child-headed, orphaned individuals and single parent households occur most often than not. The following extract supports this notion:

> *"But most of the challenges that we have is where we find learners who do not have parents. It's either orphans or single mother or father, or you may find that maybe the child is actually residing with a relative."* (Participant 2)

The same participant when questioned about child-headed households stated:

> *"It is a challenge because you will find out that this child is staying alone at home… There are so many of them.* (Participant 2)

There are instances whereby a child-headed household is the result of migration by parents to other cities to find better employment opportunities or it is the children who are sent to other cities to seek better education opportunities and they end up residing on their own with no adult supervision.

> *"Most learners are adults in the family whereby you find that the parents are in Limpopo and the child is with the siblings."* (Participant 8)

> *"They will say I am staying alone, I do not have parents and all those kind of things.*" (Participant 2)

In highlighting the hardships faced by these children, Townsend and Dawes (2004, p. 70) state children living in child-headed households are "particularly vulnerable to extreme poverty, poor nutrition, poor housing, discrimination, exploitation, educational failure and physical and sexual abuse".

Although there is a legal option available for children without parental supervision to be legally placed in alternative care, not all placements are suitable or successful. This is concurred by Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006) who suggest that child-headed

households are often the result of unsuitable alternative living arrangements. Earlier in the study it was mentioned that many learners are orphaned as a result of losing their parents to their HIV/AIDS and this is supported by Luginaah, Maticka-Tyndale and Elkins (2007) as it is suggested that child-headed households are usually more evident in communities where HIV/AIDS has weakened the safety net of the extended family.

4.3.1.1. Orphaned learners

Orphaned learners as a social problem was highlighted by four participants although, only one of them attributed HIV/AIDS as the cause. An orphan is defined by UNAIDS (2006, p. 4) as "a child under 18 years of age whose mother, father or both parents have died from any cause."

> *"One of the main problems that we face; are orphans, we have children that do not have parents and we have children who are HIV positive and acquire the disease from parents."* (Participant 6)

It is pointed out by UNICEF (2005) that in Sub-Saharan Africa during 1990 until 2003 there was a sharp increase in the number of children orphaned by the Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV).

In addition to the participants who linked being orphaned to child-headed households when asked to indicate social issues faced by the learners at the schools the participant responded as follows:

> *"Our learners are orphans…learners are heading the families, in some other occasions learners are left alone."* (Participant5)

This response is an indication that the number of learners who are orphans at this particular school community is noteworthy It is indicated by Eberson and Eloff (2002) that the disruption of the family institution and death of parents and relatives have created an unprecedented number of destitute and vulnerable children in South Africa. Through the death of parents, the traditional household and family structure is disordered, which as previously stated, leads to children heading up families. The change in family structure most often in less financially fortunate families, leads to the academic life of the eldest child being affected as he or she may be inclined to drop out of school and seek employment or other means of financial security to ensure the survival of the younger.

"You find that girl children find a way of supporting their young ones and it becomes a problem because we had few girls who came and said they had to do prostitution so that they can be able to fend for their siblings." (Participant 8)

4.3.2. Teenage pregnancy

The vulnerability of adolescents being affected by sexual content in the media is highlighted by Ward (2003) who attributes this to ability of being easily influenced at this development stage. In recent times, social media platforms have normalised sexual acts as more often than not, advertisement campaigns consist of models wearing close to nothing and the advert will often have sexual innuendoes. Due to this normalisation, teenagers often feel that engaging in sexual acts is acceptable and are often not ashamed when the end result is pregnancy. Sadly, the pregnancy issue of a learner may be accompanied by other issues as is indicted in the below quote:

"*Now recently there is a girl who came and told me that she is pregnant and then she saw a venue where they do HIV testing and all. And she went there and she tested and she found out that she is HIV positive and when she came to me she said she was going to commit suicide you know."*(Participant 8)

This is concurred by Konkco (2010) in that the author expresses the vulnerability of female learners in being exposed to promiscuity and immoral sexual behaviours that not only result in unwanted pregnancies but also hinders their academic progression and increase the chances of contracting diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Three other participants indicated that teenage pregnancy was an issue within their school community although they did not provide a detailed account of the social issue. Associated with teenage pregnancy in the school community is the issue of rape and sexual harassment or assault by male counterparts whether peers or teachers.

"*The child was nearly raped at school."* (Participant 4)

"It is very disturbing, uhmmm especially when learners are raped you know. I remember I had a Grade 8 learner who was taken by boys and then they kept her in a shack" (Participant 8)

"With the learners who would be alone and when the parents come back from Limpopo they don't want them to report the rapes." (Participant 8)

The above extracts point out that adolescent learners are exposed to sexual provocation within and outside of school community which may be a contributing factor to the growing number of pregnant learners in the high school phase. This correlates to Konkco (2010) who found that learners were exposed to rape and sexual abuse when travelling to or from school or as a result of residing in unstable conditions whereby there is no adult supervision.

4.3.3. Substance use

It is estimated that substance use among adolescents aged 12 -17 totals 13 million users (Lennox & Cecchini, 2008). The adolescent phase is filled by the need to engage in experimental activates as a result of the developmental need to be seen as engaging in adult like behaviour as well as to challenge adult authority (Rice & Dolgin, 2008). Furthermore, the absence of parents due to migration or death in a household is largely associated with substance abuse (Rice & Dolgin, 2008). The presence of substances within the school community is rapidly becoming a prominent issue as explained by two of the participants.

The other challenge is drugs, like more of marijuana. They are selling; they are smoking and all those kind of things. A child will innocently buy the cookie, eat the cookies and will get high." (Participant 2)

"I would say drugs, they contribute a lot…I know we have one case with a learner he is using drugs. At our school we have serious issue of drugs especially dagga because we see a lot of children are using it so it is a problem." (Participant 3)

Learners may most likely engage in drug or substance use as result of not being able to cope with the pressures that face at school and at home. The below extract illustrates this perfectly:

"Some kids whom I found them smoking and I asked why are you smoking, they said they powerless without taking marijuana every day. They have to take some stuff every day that they can, as in their words, energy to study and to take longer

periods in studying. So for them it is like they are hooked to it but they are looking at it in the positive ways themselves." (Participant 4)

Although it is widely reported that learners may turn to drug or substance use as a form of escapism from issues that they are faced with, it is interesting to note is that the above quote mentions that learner's associate drug or substance use with power. Adolescents are not in control of decisions made on their behalf by parents as they are minors; therefore being under the influence most likely provides a sense of being in control and independence. The response above response also makes reference to energy levels and the ability to study for longer periods, this suggestion is also made by Participant 3:

"But most of them they use this thing, we would ask them why do you use this thing and they say this thing keeps our brain working well. There are those who will say that, and I have a class where most of the boys use this dagga and this particular one apparently he is using both dagga and Nyaope. And then they will tell me that ma'am the difference between him and us is he doesn't concentrate he runs away from school because he is using this thing and us we are using dagga, dagga is just a herb and its fine."

This suggests that learners utilise substances as a means of enhancing learning and their concentration span. This sentiment is contradictory to the findings of Rice (1992) who states that learners who are affected academically by the use of cannabis are those who are regarded as top achievers academically, as they begin to experience inattention and their recollection of school work becomes diminished. This would suggest that learners engaging in substances should be lacking an interest in academics as opposed to the reported incidents in this study which suggest that the utilisation of substances helps learners to stay focused academically.

The occurrence of drug or substance use among adolescents may be due to the learner working towards being accepted by the peer group. The learner may want to fit in and feel part of the peer group. In the adolescent development stage, it is important for the learner to conform to the peer group as postulated below:

"*Most of the learners; they just want to become part of the society by engaging in unbecoming social activities like drug abuse and all those stuff."* (Participant 6)

As a measure of dealing with substance abuse, the Soul City Institute (n.d, p. 25) state that "intervention programmes should address poor social skills, e.g. low self-esteem, depression, peer pressure and poor social coping strategies, among others. Young people should be trained on how to resist peer pressure as this is the single most important risk factor for the youth"..

4.3.4. Unemployment/poverty

According to Woolard (as cited in Mbuli, 2008, p. 6) "the unemployment rate among those from poor households is 52% in comparison with an overall national rate of 29%". It was evident from the analysed data that unemployment is directly linked to poverty.

> *"Let me give an example about unemployment. It's uh the, the family's lack of skills, lack of education where parents uh they don't have the education to find the job and at the end of it, they are not employed and then they cannot provide for the kids, even the crime itself its cause of unemployment."* (Participant 1)

> *"Coming from a poor background, absentee parents and even when parents are there, they are not really working. So, poverty and [lack of] parental guidance are the biggest problems that we have."* (Participant10)

> *"We also have parents who are unemployed, so poverty is one of our problems as well."* (Participant 6)

The above social issue was evident in both communities researched depicting the low socio-economic conditions experienced by residents of these township communities as is defined by Huchzermeyer and Karam (2006, p. 3) as being "those settlements of the urban poor that have developed through the unauthorised occupation of land. Tenure insecurity is the central characteristic of informal settlements, with varying attributes of unhealthy and hazardous living conditions to which overcrowding and lack of services may contribute".

4.3.5. Bullying

The occurrence of bullying within the school context is described as a global issue and of international interest (Olweus, 1993). The issue of bullying within the school community

was majorly reported with two participants feeling that it was spurred on by the existence of gangsterism within the school community as indicated below:

> *"Basically I think what is rife in our school is physical bullying because remember it is actually influenced by the gangsterism that these guys have within their area now they bring that kind of culture here at school and they start practising that.."*(Participant 2)

> *"Bullying yes; yeah bullying because there is a lot of groups and gangsterism."* (Participant 9)

> *"They are trying to make groups so that they have gangs in the school and those gangs normally after school they used to fight. Because if you can check the learners that are coming from the challenging family backgrounds, they group themselves and they become one party. And you find that we have more than three gangsters in our school."* (Participant 7)

The South African society is depicted by acts of violence which stem from political instability and adolescents being privy to this fall prey to violence (Gasa, 2005). Two participants however felt that the issue of bullying coexists with the issue of fighting and school violence.

> *"Sometimes we experience fights here, learners are bullying each other." (Participant 5)*

> *"Some become bullies and all that and then you realise there is a problem. It starts with bullying which turns into school violence."* (Participant 8)

> *"Even last year we lost one of our learner, the learner was stabbed because there was a gang somewhere, so those learners, when the other comes in, his gangs runs away he was by himself and they stabbed him to death."*(Participant 7)

Lorber, Felton and Reid (1984) found that the social learning theory links the family in playing a vital role in the formation of bullying personalities, as learners who become bullies at school are more often than not, victims of abuse at home or are exposed to domestic violence and thus learn to model the aggressive behaviour. It was stated by one of the participant that the issue of bullying existed as a result of circumstances experienced within the home setting, this notion is supported by participant 3:

"Some of the learner because of the character that they have from home, they bully other learners." (Participant 7)

"Yes and sometimes when you analyses this bullying, you will see that this is what the child has learnt at home." (Participant 3)

4.4. Causes of social problems

Any problem or issue is often described as having a root cause or source from which it emanates. In Table 4.4 the causes of the social problems that were most prominent within the school communities highlighted by the participants are presented.

Table 4.4: ***Causes of social problems***

Cause of social problem	Number of participants
Unemployment/poverty	7
Peer pressure	3
Lack of parental involvement/ guidance	2
HIV/AIDS	1
Politics	1

4.4.1. Unemployment/poverty

Poor people lack the necessary resources and capacity to satisfy basic needs like food, shelter, health and education. They live under difficult conditions which are not conducive for development of their human potential. Majority of the participants identified unemployment and poverty as the main cause of the social problems present within their school community.

"I think these problems are caused by the background of these learners. It is very, I can say its poor." (Participant 5)

"Unemployment is because of illiterate parents who did not get the chance to go to university and all of that. And because of, you know, as a country we are facing a high rate of unemployment." (Participant 6)

"The rate of unemployment, poverty and the conditions around are actually influencing, the overcrowding and all those other things." (Participant 2)

Bhorat, Haroon, Kanbur and Ravi (2005) indicate that a low income inevitably leads to a lack of access to basic resources such as clean water, health care and proper shelter. The participant alludes to overcrowding being a result of the rate of unemployment and poverty experienced by the community. This suggestion is supported by Participant 1:

"The area it's congested, it's over populated. The community of Diepsloot; it's over populated."

As was evident in social issues identified as being most prominent in the school communities, the issue of unemployment and poverty appear to again be a prevalent cause of social issues in the context of the researched communities. Participants attributed to impoverished conditions of learners being a result of parents who were unemployed as a consequence of a lack of adequate education. This notion is supported by Francis (2001) as the author pointed out that high unemployment and poverty rates correlate with low levels of education.

4.5. Indictors of social problems

In the quest of ensuring that learner needs are addressed at all times to ensure successful academic progression, it is imperative for teachers to be able to identify learners who may be faced with a social problem. In inquiring from the participants how they identify that a learner is experiencing a social problem, indicators were identified as stipulated in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: ***Indicator of presence of social problem***

Indicator	Number of participants
Behaviour	6
Lack of uniform	2
Academic performance/lack of academic interest	4

4.5.1. Behaviour

The behaviour exhibited by learners' within the school community is a determining factor of whether the school climate is to be conducive to teaching or not as bad behaviour leads to difficulties in teaching. It was reported by the majority of the participants that they were able to identify a learner who was experiencing a social problem by their behaviour.

> *"If you are teaching the learners and you know you've been teaching them maybe for two years, three years, you know the behaviour of the child. And if you see some changes in behaviour then you can be able to learn that there's something wrong. And then the other thing is you find out that the learner is reserved, before the learner was not an introvert but now the learner is becoming an introvert then you will be able to identify that there is something wrong."* (Participant 1)

> *"Some become too violent unnecessarily but some will be just quiet, some will just cry and some will just come here and explain that they are having difficulties."* (Participant 4)

> *"All of a sudden they change drastically then you can see that there is a problem. It also changes their behaviour. They become very bully, they become very aggressive, because of what they are going through."* (Participant 8)

Deviant and misconduct are often associated with the adolescent phase. Gasa (2005, p.2) states that "it appears that learners' aggressive behaviour stems from different factors. It can be traced to learners' family backgrounds, community, school and value systems. If the learner is unstable due to the above factors, he/she may suddenly display deviant behaviour, tends to be emotionally disturbed and exhibits destructive tendencies".

4.5.2. Lack of uniform

Donning school uniform is a compulsory practice in schools but an increasing issue may be that not everyone is fortunate enough to afford the school attire. The issue of learners not having uniforms appears to be an issue that is affecting both the researched schooling communities as suggested below:

"You can be able to see it by maybe the learner does not have the uniform." (Participant 1)

"Because I am in the SBST team we can see child who doesn't have uniforms and we can see there is a problem, they don't have school uniforms; they don't have school shoes." (Participant 6)

As the learners of the researched school communities are said to derive from backgrounds that are marred by poverty, it is understandable why the participants indicated that there are learners who do not have uniform, as their parents would not be able to afford it as many of them are reported to not be employed. It is suggested by Konheim-Kalkstein (2006) that the adoption of a uniform policy in schools should cater for families who cannot afford as these are often students who come from low-income households.

4.5.3. Academic performance/ lack of academic interest

As explained by the ecological perspective that all systems of an individual's life are interconnected, it is often the academic life of a learner that becomes affected when he or she experiences difficulties in other aspects of their whole systems. It was reported by four participants that they are able to identify that learners are experiencing a social problem either by a change in the academic performance of the learner or the negative change of attitude that the learner has towards his/her studies.

"In most cases we know our learners, you can see the performance of this learner, and suddenly the performance is dropping." (Participant 2)

"Their performance, learners are not performing well in class and they then in situations when you look at a learner you can see that they are some problems." (Participant 5)

"Well, when they are not interested in school work at all and yet they are in school. So usually there's a problem." (Participant 10)

"You see by the way they perform, most of them absenteeism, lack of participation in class. You will see their performance, absenteeism, change of behaviour." (Participant 8)

From the above responses, it is apparent that the social problems that the adolescents experiences have a direct impact on their academic performance. Vernon (1995, p. 18) holds that "when a child with a high intelligence test score does poorly at school, his teacher may point to adverse features of the home background to account for his failure. The high achievement of a child of only moderate ability may be explained by reference to a favourable, encouraging home environment".

4.6. Perception of teachers' role in dealing with social problems presented by learners.

During the school day, teachers are perceived as the guardians of learners and are thus the first point of entry when a learner experiences a problem. However, not all teachers may be equipped with the necessary skills to assist the learner adequately and may perceive their role in this regard to be daunting.

4.6.1. Provision of intervention

It cannot be argued that the function of a teacher is to teach, however, in the multifaceted society we live in today, that role can be affected by the issues occurring within the school context. When asked what they perceive their role to be when they have identified a learner who is experiencing a social problem, all the participants indicated that their role is to provide intervention whether the intervention is by themselves as teachers or by referring the learner to internal support systems or external support.

> *"As a teacher if we have realized that there's some challenges you, you have to be concerned as a teacher and then uh firstly you just have to call the learner and try to find out, and if the learner open up then you have to give the learner the support. If it's beyond the teacher then the teacher can be able to consult from outside the social worker to come in and give the support."* (Participant 1)

> *"My role as a teacher is to just motivate and guide at least just give some support to say that… go to a community clinic, can you go to a community clinic where you can get a social worker or have you reported the matter to the police station, that is the kind of support we are issuing to these learners." (Participant 2)*

"We have sponsors, we have partners, if it's a uniform, we cloth the child through our sponsors. If it's a problem that needs social workers like grants we tell social workers and ask them to intervene." (Participant 4)

"So if I identify a learner to having a problem I contact a social worker to come here to help the learners. Although the department is failing us because most of the time they don't come and sometimes they come but they don't do follow ups, so it's a problem." (Participant 5)

The participants from the school in the Diepsloot community seem to suggest that there are external support systems available to them. They mentioned having access to the clinic, the police, sponsors as well as social workers in their community. Draft National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (2008) highlights procedures to be followed by educators in providing intervention to learners. The first step in the process is for the teacher to conduct an initial screening guided by the learner profile. Step two involves identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development at school level, at which point the School-Based support team becomes involved. The last step in the process is identifying and addressing barriers to learning and development at district level which at this point means that the matter has been escalated to the Department of Education.

In contrast the participants from the school in the Tembisa community seem to mainly rely on internal support systems as indicated by the extracts below:

"I have to speak to the committee and we can see what the means we can help with are." (Participant 6)

"I normally report these learners to the staff. If there are things that I can do, so I can advise the learner. If the case is more serious I refer to the senior person." (Participant 7)

"As a teacher you need to intervene maybe do one on one and do one on one with the learners find out what is the problem." (Participant 9)

"Well the most that I can do is talk to them; find out where is the problem is and help them to identify resources if they are available but that is the most that I can do." (Participant 10)

The emphasis of utilisation of internal resources by the second group of participants could be related to the fact that the participants mostly service on committees within the school community that are aimed at assisting learners to deal with social issues. One such committee is the School-Based Support Team (SBST) whose functions are described as providing assessments, monitoring and supporting learners with barriers to academics (SIAS, 2008)

4.7. Experience when attempting to assist learners facing social problems

As a result of not being professionally qualified to assist learners with their social problems, teachers may experience certain challenges when attempting to intervene.

4.7.1. Barriers prohibiting provision of assistance

One of the participants stated that she finds it hard to assist learners facing social problems as they often do not want to share what they are going through:

> *"Once you identified the learner; that the learner has a challenge, umh in most cases learners they don't want to open up. In most cases learners don't want to tell exactly what is happening."* (Participant 1)

Participant 2 in the extract below provided a similar response but he further attributed the challenge to the fact that female learners may not be comfortable with a male teacher. Secondly he suggested that he may not be adequately equipped as he wished that there was a person present to provide professional services such as a social worker as learners often request teacher to keep confidential the information shared.

> *"It is not easy for a child to tell you that but some of them will come especially when you approach. And now I remember the one I had to ask if she can talk to female teacher to come and talk to this learner. She said no, I only told you and it must remain with you. And now I do not know what to do. I feel like maybe there should be a social worker around the school so that I can just run to the person and say look here this is the challenge."*

The challenge of not being adequately equipped to assist learners was raised by Participant 5:

"I have experienced is that I don't that much knowledge. I can see that the learner there are so many problems but I don't know how make this learner tell me whatever. We're lacking the experience and the knowledge in that area."

One of the participants reported that a challenge that they face when making referrals to external social workers, is that at times the child does not receive the adequate support and assistance that they require.

"There is not enough help because at one point you take a child to a social worker but they come back without the help. So, those are the challenges that you meet when you are dealing with social problems." (Participant 4)

One participant noted that she finds it difficult to deal with the problems that are experienced by the learners as she is a mother herself.

"Because I am a parent and because I am a human being it is not nice to see somebody else suffer and when it is a child it is even more painful because you know that it is not their doing and they do not have power to or the ability to get themselves out of that situation. So as an emotional person and mother it is not easy on me."

Other participants reported that although learners may at first not be comfortable with sharing their problems, they eventually approach the teacher for help as they view the teacher as someone who has shown interest and care towards them.

4.8. Challenges experienced when assisting learners facing social problem

It emerged from the study that teachers are faced with complex challenges and difficulties when assisting learners who are facing social problems.

4.8.1. Lack of parental support or parental involvement

Parents are identified being vital to the successful progression of a child in the academic capacity. It was cited by the majority of the participants that the greatest challenge they face in assisting learners who are experiencing social issues, is the lack of parental support or parental involvement.

*"In most cases they try by all means to engage parents and not all parents are supportive."(*Participant 2)

"The other challenge is that in a situation whereby we have to call the parents to come, the parents are not cooperative; they are not coming in. so that's the problem."(Participant 5)

"The challenges that we are having is support from the parents like I am saying. You find that some of the parents if you call them they don't come and if they don't come you are not going to win."(Participant 7)

Donald, Lazarus and Lowana (2002) suggest that the lack of parental support can become a barrier to learning; this is a result of parents being unavailable or unable to assist learners.

4.8.2. Lack of training

Training is imperative to the professional development of an individual in order to enhance one's skills and knowledge. It was explained by Participant 1 and 8 that they experience a challenge with not being trained to deal with social issues faced by learners:

"The problem is that I'm not qualified. And sometimes I don't know uh how to approach that learner cause I'm not qualified I have not been trained of how to approach a learner who have those social uh issues, uh those social problems so sometimes you approach a learner in a different way or in a way that is not acceptable and then at the end of it the learner will explode." (Participant 1)

"As a teacher I am trained teach you know, I am trained to counsel them but I am not a social worker. It affects me, I think as a social worker it is like a nurse when they see a wound they are not as scared as me because they have been trained to deal with these things so if affects emotionally. Sometimes I do not know how to deal with the learner in a classroom situation. I start feeling pity for the learner and you find that now I cannot do what I have to do. If a learner didn't write, I think of the story that the learner told me and now I can't even discipline." (Participant 8)

The challenges mentioned above are a clear indication that at both schools, there is a need for professional support systems in order to alleviate the responsibility from the teachers as

they are after all mandated to teach and not to provide counselling services. The Department of Education (2001, p. 19) emphasizes the training of teachers as a means of "supporting all learners, educators and the systems as a whole so that the full range of learning needs can be met". The existence of challenges faced by teachers is a clear indication that teachers may not necessarily receive the training as stipulated by the Department of Education, hence their inability to fully support learners facing social problems.

4.9. Effects of social problems on learners

A problem may affect a person in more than one aspect of their life and the effects can have either positive or negative connotations.

4.9.1. Effect on academic performance

When probed about whether the social problems that learners experience affect their academic performance, all the participants reported there to be a negative effect on the academic performance of the learners.

> "*It affects them negatively, negatively so. At the end of it, uh the performance it drops."* (Participant 1)
>
> *"As I indicated that the performance will drastically drop even participation in class."* (Participant 2)
>
> *"It affects 100%. You know what if a learner is challenged then their performance drops. It doesn't matter how excellent or how good the learner was." (Participant 8)*

The above three participants described the negative effect to specifically be a decline in academic performance. The decline is described in the extracts below as a result of the social problems causing a lack of interest and concentration towards school work.

> *"I think to a very large extent. Their reason for non-performance academically is because a lot of social problems, peer pressure and so forth."* (Participant 3)

"I think to a larger extent uhhmm the problems that the kids are having they affect the academic performance." (Participant 4)

*"They do affect a lot because ehhhhhh immediately a learner experiences or encounter a problem the learner is unable to learn." (*Participant 5)

It seems that there is a suggestion that the academic performance has a direct link to the home circumstances as indicated below:

"They affect them in a serious way. One a learner, especially if there is abuse in the family, or there's a loss of a breadwinner, the learner quickly loses interest in school work." (Participant 10)

"It does a lot because the learner sometimes ehhh he or she becomes absent from school" (Participant 9)

"It's very serious ma'am because most of the learners are under achievers and it is because of the social problems they are having especially from home, from community because when the learner comes from a poor family background those learners cannot concentrate." (Participant 7)

The academic performance of adolescents is reported to decrease in the face of absenteeism as a result of the problems they are faced with (Berk, 2007).

4.9.2. Bio -psychosocial effects

Experiencing social problems may have traumatic effects on a learner more so, affecting their thought processes and changes in personality. Participants were asked if the social problems experienced by learners had any bio-psychosocial effects and many suggested social and emotional effects.

"Socially they are they are affected. Cause uhm, a learner who has some problems at home they cannot be able to integrate with others." (Participant 1)

"I think it is more emotionally, like how do you if the father is dead now there is no more money, you are struggling. Or the father is fighting with the mother and you don't know which side to take. There is more emotional rather than other ways." (Participant 10)

In addressing psychological and physical effects, the following was reported:

> *"They are affected mentally. They affected emotionally and physically."* (Participant 5)

> *"Psychologically, yes because the child won't concentrate in class and most of the time you find that he or she is at home thinking. Sometimes when they write, you give them tasks to write or maybe you give comprehension to write or composition to write he or she will write about the experience they had. Remember when they write they write things that are emotional."* (Participant 9)

The above extracts are all an indication that more than one aspect of the learners' life is affected by the social problems that they experience. These aspects may also have a domino effect on each other as it has been indicated overall by the participants. Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that ecosystem of an individual involves the biological, psychological, social and cultural contexts in which a developing person, in this instance, the adolescent learner, interacts and the consequent learning and behavioural trends that develop over time. Hence, as suggested by Vonk (2001) that adolescents exhibit psychological distress if perceived their school community to be unsupportive to their needs.

4.10. Support services

Due to the school being like a second home to learners as this where they spend the better part of their day, the school needs to be able to provide the appropriate support to the needs of learners.

4.10.1. Services available within the school community

Internal services are those found directly within the school community. Participants were requested to identify support services available within their school community. Two participants of the school in Diepsloot indicated that they were aware of a social worker being available to assist the school.

"The only one that I know of it's a social worker that we work with in most cases. We do have, we do have a social worker but the social worker is not permanently based at school." (Participant 1)

"I once heard that there is a social worker at school but then I don't know how this social worker would work because whenever I saw her, this lady she would be in the library. I have never seen her with learners or what, I don't know." (Participant 3)

The other three participants reported that there was a School Based Support Team (SBST) available within the school as a support service to learners.

"We have this school based SBST. We have that team around who are actually for support. As a committee they need to sit down and come up with strategies on how to assist these kind of learners." (Participant 2)

"The SBST structure is able to deal with the learners with those social problems. That structure is able to refer the kids to the professional people at the district to intervene." (Participant 4)

"We do have the SBST which is the school based support team." (Participant 5)

The White Paper 6 (2001) instructs schools to establish a school-based support team (SBST) that will work together with the district support team (DST. Kovaleski, Tucker and Stevens (1996) suggest that function of an SBST should be to provide interventions strategies and resources that will enhance teacher support to learners who are experiencing challenges.

Two of the participants of the school in Tembisa reported to have both the availability of social worker and the SBST:

"We do have SBST committee where we call the child and speak to them and we assure them that whatever we are saying's private and confidential we have to earn the trust of the learners. And also the social worker, we do get social workers that are assigned to the school so if we have a problem we call them and we let them know that there is a child who is in need and they come and assess the learners on a continual basis." (Participant 6)

"We refer them to the social workers, and we refer them to SBST." (Participant 7)

Although other teachers of the same school indicated that there are support services within the school community, the following participants only indicated the Life Orientation (LO) department as being the only support service available.

"*Within the school there's, there are LO (life orientation) teachers who we usually encourage to, we tell them about the problems and they, they are, they have links with social workers who can come to the school to counsel the learners. But it's not a permanent solution because there is no permanent social worker, I think the available social worker probably deals with about ten or more schools."* (Participant 10)

"I do not want to lie, except us trying to speak to them and taking them to the LO department there is nothing much that can be done."(Participant 8)

In agreeing with the above extract, Participant 9 also responded as follows: "not much", indicating that there is a lack of services. The researcher then probed on what the purpose of the committee he serves on was and this was the response given:

"The bereavement committee what it does, it is like when the learner passes away, the father and the mother; we will pop out money and we give it to the learner to send it to the home and most of the time what we do , if there are food parcels we give them food parcels."

When further probed on whether any of the committee members were qualified to provide bereavement counselling, the participant explained as follows:

"Normally no, I just use my expertise, I have got a class, I use the, what I do on a daily basis I give them word. I encourage them on a daily basis and I encourage them and I tell them how to behave."

This response indicates that there are no services available to learners who are experiencing a loss of death in their lives.

4.10.2. Procedure for access to services.

For provision of services to occur efficiently, there needs to be a procedure or guideline followed by school communities. Participants were requested to describe the procedure followed for learners to have access to support services available and the responses were as follows:

> *"It's a referral by a teacher with a consultation with parents. Teachers cannot just do it alone. Teachers have to consult the parents first but it's a referral by, by a teacher."* (Participant 1)

> *"I don't think they can just go to the team by themselves, usually learners when they have problems they come to the class teacher and the teacher if he or she feels that I can't handle this she would refer the learner to the team. That's what we do otherwise, I think learners themselves, I don't know. They just know that the first person to go to is my class teacher."* (Participant 3)

> *"The SBST team can do that or a teacher can just identify a child."* (Participant 4)

> *"The learners some of them they just approach us. In some cases, the class educators they just bring the learners to us because I am one of the members of SBST."* (Participant 5)

The participants of the school in Diepsloot all indicated that there must be teacher involvement or involvement of a member of the SBST. The Department of Education makes provision in the *Education White Paper 6* (DoE, 2001) that support to learning must occur as collaboration among children, parents, schools and local communities specifically, a school-based support team (SBST) could be established to assist in providing learning support together with teachers in order to address the needs of the children in the school. The role of the SBST would involve establishing in-service training for teachers to assist in the identification, assessment and support of children experiencing barriers to learning (Landsberg, 2005).

The participants of the school in Tembisa seem to be in consensus with this procedure as it was reported as follows:

"Well the first port of call for the, any learner with a problem is to the class teacher and then the class teacher then can refer them to the HOD and the HOD can take it further." (Participant 10)

The last extract included a different dynamic by introducing a department head as part of the procedure for access to services, which is an indication that the school values the input of management in dealing with learners facing social problems.

4.10.3. Perception of the effectiveness of support services

The effectiveness of support services is directly linked to the utilization and the quality of services being provided. When asked how effective the participants perceive the support services available, there seemed to be mixed perceptions as two participants deemed the services provided to not be effective.

"As far as the social worker is not permanently based, I can't say it's, it's, it's more effective." (Participant 1)

"Out of 100%, I will say i think they are only 30%, even 30% for me I think I am being lenient. (Participant 2)

Three participants were in support of the services provided by the SBST. They perceived the services to be effective.

"I think it is very effective, the one that we have the team that we have at my school is very effective." (Participant 3)

"For me I will say the SBST team is effective in terms of functioning as a structure but I don't know how well there are aware of what they must handle because most of the time they do referrals." (Participant 4)

"I can say in some cases we have won to assist these learners although I was telling you that we don't have that much knowledge of assisting because ehhh sometimes when we see that this problem we can't tackle we refer the learner to the District Support team." (Participant 5)

Surprisingly though was the fact that although participant 4 and 5 stated that they perceived services to be effective, they both stated that referrals are the basis of the success of the services provided to learners facing social problems.

The second set of participants also provided mixed perceptions with two stating that the services were effective.

> *"I think it's very effective but I think the numbers will be the ones to slow the process. If we have fewer social workers and many children, they are unable to help all of them so I think in our case it will be the number. They are not even. We have many children and we have few social workers."* (Participant 6)

> *"It is very effective however; it is like a drop of water in the ocean."* (Participant 7)

Although both the participants agree that the services are effective, they both point out that there are limitations to the services provided. This notion is supported by participant 10:

> *"I think they are inadequate. I think people mean well but I think sometimes good intentions without resources will not come to anything."*

In support of these views is the Department of Education (1997, p. 17) which states that "in some contexts, inappropriate or inadequate support services may contribute to learning breakdown or exclusion. Learners may require individualised intervention to address barriers to learning and may not have access to them".

4.10.4. External services utilized by school community

External services would comprise of those found outside of the school community that are utilized in assisting learners facing social problems. Participants were asked to indicate external services utilized by the school to assist learners facing social problems. Two participants referred to sponsors that support the school:

> *"We have partnership with our, our sponsors they call them the OSAAT, one school at a time. If we have a challenge, then we can be able to consult them and then they can be able to refer us to their uh their own uh social workers, that can be able to help us. And the other one again, we are also busy with the programme of YES which it says Youth Enterprise Society and then the group have committed*

themselves to help is any way especially when it comes to those types of things uh problems, social issues and the rest when we need the social workers." (Participant 1)

"*We have our sponsor they will call one school at a time." (*Participant 2)

It was indicated by two participants that the services of social workers in the community were enlisted, although participant five stated that a further service or step taken was that of referrals to the district support team.

"I know some sometimes, they are social workers not far from the school. I know that they are working with the social workers." (Participant 3)

"We are trying to help with the help of the social workers. Although I told you they are failing us. There are social workers, and to refer them to the district SBST. It's made up of those different people. The social workers, the psychologist, the nurse yes" (Participant 5)

"*We have SANCA, dealing with the rehabilitation of learners and that's what we have and we have social workers to counsel the learners and to go with them and to support them as they go to the SANCA."* (Participant 4)

One participant mentioned the utilization of a substance use related service provider which supports the idea that substance use is an issue within the school community. This service provider was also indicated by participant 6:

"No we are unable to access educational psychologists but we do also use our religious bodies, our pastors. SANCA we are working with them. So if you have a child who is into drugs, we then refer to them. The clinic is here next to us so we do work with the clinic; we are working hand in hand and SAPS as well, uhmmm in terms of criminal activities and the law enforcement education." (Participant 6)

Participant 9, like the above participant also indicated the utilization of religious support:

"There is an organisation that came here especially with the pastors."

The utilization of a psychologist was indicated by two participants:

"There's a psychologist from the district who can be called if there's extreme problems but again this is from the district, it's in charge of about twenty schools and it's just one or two people, that's not enough." (Participant 10)

"Normally when the learners are having those challenges, we normally arrange the external psychologist. Some they even refer them to SASSA so that they can be assisted with the grants at home."(Participant 7)

The utilization of the South African Social Security Agency is an indication of the existence of social problems within the school community. Kanku and Mash (2010) described communities characterised by poor socioeconomic conditions to include unemployment, poverty and reliance on government grants.

4.10.5. Role of parents

It is important for schools to create partnerships with the parents of learners as parents have significant influence on their children. Participants were asked to indicate the role of the parents in providing support services to learners facing social problems.

"The parents are very passive when it comes to those issues. They are not actively involved" (Participant 1)

"The role is for them to be part of the whole process but not all parents are supportive and the other thing most of these children who are being supported most of them do not have parents that is where the challenges come in." (Participant 2)

Participant 5 emphasizes the provisions made by the school to encourage parent involvement and despite these measures, no support is received.

"The parents are playing a minimal role; they don't show their full support." (Participant 7)

"With learners that I have dealt with there is no support structure from the parents, no support structure at all. Parents are not participating in anything because most of our learners the parents are really poor and these kids who are experiencing problems are child headed." (Participant 8)

In essence all the participants pointed out the lack of parental support within their school community which was indicated earlier in the study as a major challenge faced by teachers in assisting learners. A reason for this lack could be due to parents being unaware as Harrison (2006, p. 41) postulates that "adolescents who experience physiological and other changes often find it difficult to discuss these experiences with their parents".

4.10.6. Planning and development of support services

Support services within the school environment need to be clearly defined and comprehensive in order to cater for the developing needs of adolescent learners. Participants were asked to identify services that they would include if they were given a chance to develop support service within the school community. This gave participants the opportunity to identify gaps within their current support service structures. Majority of the participants indicated the services of social workers as their immediate need.

> *"I would wish for every school to have a permanent social worker, to have a permanent psychologist so that uh they can be able to give the support, immediate support within the school. It shouldn't be an issue of waiting for somebody to come in and give the support."* (Participant 1)

> *"Definitely the first thing that would be emotional support, a social worker is needed."* (Participant 2)

> *"I think I will make sure that there is a social worker and the social worker is visible."* (Participant 3)

> *"Firstly I will just request the department to give us the social worker who will be here twenty-four seven and always be here to assist us with Diepsloot learners. A nurse number one, a psychologist number two; especially for these gamblers."* (Participant 5)

> *"I would introduce social services. I think if there were professionals like social workers in the school even if they could be assigned not every day but some times a week but they must be based in school because we experience problems. So I would want to see social workers in the schools."* (Participant 8)

"I think I would recommend that we have social workers that would be in the school on permanent basis." (Participant 7)

Participants indicated permanency and visibility of the social worker as one of the requirements of acquiring social work services.

"I would get people who are real social workers who can help the child. I think people like the people dealing with drugs or rehabilitation groups apart from social workers but I will look for those who are dealing with things that we are experiencing here at school." (Participant 4)

"I would like every grade to have a social worker and then I will also involve health education for example sexual education and drug and all these things because they are affecting our learners very much." (Participant 6)

"I would permanently want a psychologist within the school. A social worker based in the school. A reading specialist based in the school or a speech therapist and, and a strong disciplinary committee." (Participant 10)

"I would include police services to be in the school." (Participant 9)

The need for multidisciplinary teams within the school community is indicated by three of the participants speaking to the diversity of social problems that learners are faced with in the school community. Donald, Lazarus and Lowana (2002) suggest that social issues impact profoundly on the development of adolescents and correspondingly influence the effectiveness of the school community and as such, the development of support services should be approached from this aspect in order to effectively serve the needs of the learners.

4.11. Training/policies

Being adequately equipped to assist with learner needs is would be a beneficial skill to many teachers as more and more adolescents face adverse circumstances both within the school community and in their home life.

4.11.1. Training received to deal with social problems

It was reported by the majority of the participants that they had received no training to deal with the social issues faced by learners.

> *"I don't want to lie. I've never received the training."* (Participant 1)

> *"Well there's no training at all. So it is hoped that, there are intentions to provide training but it doesn't materialise."* (Participant 10)

Participant 4 reported to have received training on the Values of Learners but did not indicate if training was related to social problems faced by learners. On the other hand, participant 9 reported to have expertise that she had gained whilst working in the corporate field. Although the participant 6 found it to be challenging to assist learners experiencing social problems, she also noted that for her it was a little easier as a result of her educational background as she is a qualified Life Orientation teacher with a degree in psychology. Barthes (1990, p. 49) states that "nothing within a school has more impact on learners in terms of skills development, self-confidence or classroom behaviour than the personal and professional development of their teachers.

4.11.2. Procedure for contravention of school policy

Schools are governed by a code of conduct that illustrates acceptable behaviour and standards that learners are required to adhere to. Participants were asked to report on the procedures that were followed when learners contravened a school policy. Most participants indicated that the first step is to call the learner in before involving parents or school management.

> *"The first step that uh, need, that is taken at school, in our school, the learner will be called. The learner will be given a letter to call in the parents."* (Participant 1)

> *"Action number one is to call the parent, no before calling the parent, we sit down with the learner we talk to the leaner. Number two; include the parent."* (Participant 5)

It was also indicated that the learners receive a call-in letter for their parents to come to the school for consultation.

"Depending on the problem, we issue out a call letter to call the parents. We call the parents and then we explain to the parent what the learner did." (Participant 8)

*"What we do normally we send them a call letter maybe we speak to them first then we call the parents. We give them a call letter so that the parents can come so that we sit and talk to them." (*Participant 9)

"Good discipline is one of the key characteristics of an effective school environment and it is essential for effective teaching and learning" (Squelch, 2006, p. 247).This ensures effective school functionality and prohibits learners from misbehaving.

4.12. Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the analysis of the data collected from participants during the research process. The main themes were discussed and supported with insider experiences from participants and relevant literature that either supported or contradicted the findings.

In chapter five the main findings will be highlighted in relation to the research question, aim and objectives of the study, the conclusions and recommendations arising from the findings of this research will be presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the main findings of the research study will be emphasised and related to the four secondary objectives that the study set out to investigate. This chapter will also present some concluding remarks by the researcher and make recommendations to relevant role players.

5.2. Main Findings in relation to secondary objectives

The first objective was to explore the social issues learners are faced with and teachers are expected to assist learners with.

It can be concluded that the most prevalent social problem occurring in the school communities that were researched was child-headed households which often occurs as result of learners being orphaned or being raised by single parents who reside elsewhere for employment purposes. Other prevalent social problems that were identified were teenage pregnancy, drug/substance use, conditions of unemployment or poverty and bullying.

Causes of social problems were identified by the participants as being the conditions of unemployment or poverty that plague the communities in which learners reside. These causes can be identified as barriers to learning and are identified to be of socio-economic origin. The participants noted that learners facing social problems were identifiable by the occurrences of changes in their behaviour, not having the correct or any school uniform as well as by the decline in their academic performance. The effects of social problems on learners were identified as a negative effect on academic performance, social and emotional well-being. The impact or effects that the barriers to learning have on the adolescent learner need to be clearly understood in order for the appropriate support services to be rendered in assist the learner overcome the barriers. Socio-economic barriers such as poverty affect the learning of a child as you may find that the nutrition obtained in

an economically disadvantaged household is inadequate to sustain the concentration levels of the child. Thus the option of a feeding scheme in the school setting would be appropriate as a support system.

The second objective was to investigate challenges teachers are confronted with in assisting learners facing social issues.

In exploring the challenges that the teachers experience in assisting learners facing social problems, majority reported the lack of parental support or parental involvement as well as not being adequately equipped to assist. Although parents are the key to their child's development, those of learners identified in the study seem to not play active or support role. This may be a result of their socio-economic background which would mean that many of them are uneducated and literate which makes their role less effective in the child's life.

The third objective was to identify the types of support services provided in schools for teachers and learners.

In identifying support services, the School-Based Support Team was identified as the most utilized and most often, the only internal resource. According to Engelbrecht, Green, Naicker & Engelbrecht (1999, p. 54) "the aim of these teams is to assess the needs and difficulties as referred by educators within a school and to devise intervention plans in consultation with the support service personnel." There is a need for support services to support teachers and the school system itself. Identification and utilization of other support services was found to be minimal in this study.

The final objective was to investigate how equipped teachers are in dealing with social issues faced by learners.

In response to training, majority reported to have never received any training equipping them to assist learners facing social problems. It is of great concern is that teachers providing counselling roles they were not trained for as this may cause more harm to the learners they seek to support. It was evident that the teacher pre-service training curriculum does not include counselling modules and ethics. The sensitivity and complexity of social problems that adolescent learners face requires the guidance and support of experts that are trained accordingly. This is not to say that there is no role for teachers to play, teachers are in a position to conduct early intervention assessments as they interact with learners more

than the parents of the learners. However, this would require the teachers to be adequately trained in order to fulfil this role effectively and competently. Continuous professional development is required for teachers to empower them to assist learners effectively.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of the study have shown that there are gaps in the school community researched in terms of teachers providing assistance to learners who are facing social problems. From the findings and conclusions made in this study, recommendations are suggested for the school community, the Department of Education (DoE) as well as future researchers.

5.3.1. School community

The School Management Team (SMT) or DoE is encouraged to revise existing or develop new policies that will promote collaborative family-school partnerships. Schools should create welcoming school climates that foster family-school relationships (Ferguson, 2008). Furthermore, policies that focus on creating a supportive psychosocial school climate should be developed for school communities.

Internal support systems in schools, for adolescents, could be the development and mobilization of peer counsellors and peer mediation within the school setting. Adolescents today face growing amounts of pressures and problems that can have a direct effect on their academics, health and safety. The basic model of this position can be described as students trained to help troubled students in their school.

5.3.2. Department of Education (DoE)

The Department of Education (DoE) could assist school communities by ensuring that the psychosocial needs of adolescent learners are met. This would entail the provisioning of support services or systems such as social workers and other allied health professionals. The need of a social worker was crucially expressed by the participants of this study and it is thereby recommended that the DoE heed to this call of help.

In keeping with the requirements of continuous professional development (CPD), teachers need to be provided with training that will assist them in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners.

Furthermore, schools need to be made aware of support service providers within their located community to ensure a collaborative relationship in assisting learners.

5.3.3. Future research

The study focused on the experiences of teachers in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners in a high school setting. The themes that emerged from the study show several areas of possible further research. There is need to conduct studies on the experiences of the adolescent learners facing social problems as the study revealed the challenges faced by adolescent learners especially those living in child-headed households. Exploring the coping mechanisms in dealing with such challenges can be valuable to the provision of appropriate support services within the school community. A further study can be done on the existing support services that are in place within the communities to assist learners in dealing with the social problems that they face. Furthermore, parental perspectives of raising adolescents facing social problems can be researched.

5.4. Limitations of the research study

The focus of the study had to be precise and linked to the research question, so teachers were selected from schools within the Diepsloot and Tembisa areas of Gauteng where the referrals mainly come from. Future studies may make use of a different context and setting to determine if the findings of the study can be transferred to other settings as the findings of this study will be true to the context and setting researched. The interviews as a data collection method may have increased the risk of participant bias and prevented disclosure of personal information. This aspect was addressed by use of the confidentiality clause and informed consent forms to ensure that participants were aware of the process of data collection.

5.5. Conclusion

This study explored teachers' experiences in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners within the school community. The study revealed the negative effects that the social problems experienced by adolescent learners has on not only the learner as a person, but also on learners' interactions with others and in the systems that the learner is involved in. It was also identified that there is an inadequacy from the Department of Education to support both learners and teachers with the social problems that occur within the school community. The emergence of social problems among adolescents and the domino effect it has on their schooling life highlight a great need for support services to be provided to schools to ensure the educational process is not disrupted.

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Appendix A

"Exploring teachers' experiences in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners: The case of two high schools in Diepsloot, Gauteng"

Participant information sheet

Good day

My name is Fezile Bekwa and I am a post graduate student registered for the degree MA in Occupational Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of the requirements for the degree, I am conducting research regarding teachers' experiences in

dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners specifically learners based in schools within the Diepsloot area. It is hoped that the information gathered may assist in creating awareness of teacher's experiences in dealing with learners facing social issues as well as creating an awareness of the need to implement school based support services within the school setting and moreover, training policies directed at assisting teachers to deal with social problems facing learners.

I therefore wish to invite you to participate in my study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and refusal to participate will not be held against you in any way. If you agree to take part, I shall arrange to interview you at a time and place that is suitable for you. The interview will last approximately one hour. You may withdraw from the study at any time any you may also refuse to answer any questions that you feel uncomfortable with answering.

With your permission, the interview will be tape recorded. No-one other than the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the tapes. The tapes and interview schedules will be kept in a locked cabinet for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study. Please be assured that your name and personal details will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be included in the final research report.

As the interview will include sensitive issues, there is the possibility that you may experience some feelings of emotional distress. Should you therefore feel the need for supportive counselling following the interview, I have arranged for this service to be provided free of charge by the Department of Social Development (Diepsloot Service office) and FAMSA (Diepsloot Service office). To make an appointment, they may be contacted at 011 207 2674 or 011 207 2660.

Please contact me on 072 663 0723 or my supervisor, Dr Edmarie Pretorius on 011 717 4476 if you have any questions regarding my study. We shall answer them to the best of our ability. Should you wish to receive a summary of the results of the study; an abstract will be made available on request.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in the study.

Yours Sincerely,

Ms Fezile Bekwa

Appendix B

Consent Form for Participation in the study

I hereby consent to participate in the research study. The purpose and procedures of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that:

- My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study without being disadvantaged in any way.

- I may choose not to answer any specific questions asked if I do not wish to do so.

- There are no foreseeable benefits or particular risks associated with participation in this study.

- My identity will be kept strictly confidential, and any information that may identify me, will be removed from the interview transcript.

- A copy of my interview transcript without any identifying information will be stored permanently in a locked cupboard and may be used for future research.

Name of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix C

Consent form for Audio-Taping of the interview

I hereby consent to tape –recording of the interview.

I understand that:

- The recording will be stored in a secure location (a locked cupboard or password-protected computer) with restricted access to the research and the research supervisor.
- The recording will be transcribed and any information that could identify me will be removed.
- When the data analysis and write-up of the research study is complete, the audio-recording of the interview will be kept for two years following any publications or for six years if no publications emanate from the study and then destroyed.

- The transcript with all identifying information directly linked to me removed, will be stored permanently and may be used for future research.
- Direct quotes from my interview, without any information that could identify me may be cited in the research report or other write-ups of the research.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix D

Semi structured Interview Schedule

A: Social Issues

1. What would you say are the social issues/problems that learners at your school experience?

2. What do you think are the causes of the social problems experienced by learners?

3. What are the indicators for you that a learner is experiencing one or other social issues?

B: Response to social problems

1. How do you perceive your role when you have identified a learner who is experiencing a social problem?

2. How do you assist learners with the social issues that they experience?

3. Can you tell me about your experience when assisting learners with the social issues?

4. Can you describe any challenges that you have experienced when assisting learners facing social issues?

C: Effects of social problems

1. In your view to what extent do social problems affect the academic performance of the learners?

2. In what way do the social problems have any biopsychosocial effects on the learners?

D: Support services/structures

1. Can you tell me what support services are available within the school to assist learners with the social issues that they are facing? (e.g. a social worker, psychologist/counsellor etc.)

2. What is the procedure that must be followed for learners to have access to these services? (e.g. referral by teacher)?

3. How effective do you perceive the support services available are to assist learners in dealing with social problems?

4. What types of external support services do the school utilise to assist learners?

5. What role do the parents of the learners play in the support services process?

6. If you were in control of planning and developing support services for learners, what is it that you will include?

E: Training/Policies

1. Share with me any training that you have received to deal with social issues faced by learners and at which point of your career did you received the training?

2. What procedure are learners subjected to first if they contravene any school policies? (e.g. drug use on school premises)

SOCIAL WORK
THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (SHCD)

DEPARTMENTAL HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SOCIAL WORK) CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

PROTOCOL NUMBER: SW/2/16/3/1

ROJECT TITLE: Exploring teachers' experiences in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners: The case of two high schools in Diepsloot, Gauteng.

RESEARCHER/S: Ms Fezile E. Bekwa (782340)

SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT: SHCD Social Work

DATE CONSIDERED: 23 March 2016

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE: Approved

EXPIRY DATE: 30 June 2017

DATE: 23 May 2016 **CHAIRPERSON:** E Pretorius

Cc: Supervisor: Dr Edmarie Pretorius

DECLARATION OF RESEARCHER(S)

To be completed in **DUPLICATE** and **ONE COPY** returned to the Administrative Assistant, Room 8, Department of Social Work, Umthombo Building Basement.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorised to carry out the above-mentioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the committee. **For Masters and PhD an annual progress report is required.**

SIGNATURE

25 / 05 / 2016
DATE

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

For administrative use only:
Reference no: D2017 / 003
enquiries: Diane Buntting 011 843 6503

GAUTENG PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**5 April 2016**
Validity of Research Approval:	**5 April 2016 to 30 September 2016**
Name of Researcher:	**Bekwa F.E.**
Address of Researcher:	**4 Pebblestone Bend; Cnr Alison and Bridge Road; Buccleuch; 2090**
Telephone / Fax Number/s:	**011 207 2674; 072 663 0723; 011 207 2666**
Email address:	**fezz.bekwa@gmail.com; Fezile.Bekwa@gauteng.gov.za**
Research Topic:	**Exploring teachers' experiences in dealing with social problems faced by adolescent learners: the case of two High schools in Diepsloot, Gauteng**
Number and type of schools:	**TWO Secondary Schools**
District/s/HO	**Johannesburg North**

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

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

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

CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principal/s and the chairperson/s of the School Governing Body (SGB) must be presented with a copy of this letter.*

Bekwa
2016/04/05

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management ER&KM)
9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001