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Khumalo, Gift

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UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng.

A dissertation on a research study presented to
The Department of Social Work
School of Human and Community Development
Faculty of Humanities
University of the Witwatersrand

In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Social Work by Dissertation
by

Gift Khumalo

Supervisor: Professor Edmarie Pretorius

April, 2021

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work is my own. I understand that plagiarism is wrong, and I confirm that all the work in this research report is my unaided work and that I have correctly referenced all the sources utilised. This work remains the property of the University of the Witwatersrand.

Signature: 

Date: 30 April 2021

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- Most importantly, thank you God Almighty for the strength, wisdom and perseverance that you bestowed upon me to warrant the successful completion of this project. Indeed, you continue being the author and finisher of my destiny.

ABSTRACT

Adolescence is an overwhelming developmental period for many learners characterised by numerous developmental challenges that affect their psychosocial wellbeing. These challenges impact their interactions with the world around them, as well as their school participation and performance, and often act as barriers to their learning. While great research has been done on adolescents' development and the psychosocial challenges they face, not much research has been conducted with the focus on the context of adolescents attending school in government schools of South Africa. The research study endeavoured to explore the psychosocial challenges experienced by grade 10-12 learners in two government schools in the south of Johannesburg. The research study aims to explore the psychosocial challenges experiences by grade 10-12 learners and to explore the perceptions of teachers and social workers on how psychosocial challenges and support services can influence learners' performance and wellbeing. This research study made use of an exploratory qualitative research design. Data was collected from a population of learners in grades 10-12, school HOD teachers of grades 10-12 and school social workers through various methods, including an open-ended survey structured as written interview and telephonic interviews. Purposive sampling was used as a sampling technique to select 22 learners in grades 10-12, three Heads of Departments teachers in the grades 10 to 12, and three Department of Social Development school social workers rendering services to schools in the south of Johannesburg. Data was analysed through thematic analysis from the written interviews and the in-depth interviews. The findings of this research study showed that learners experience various psychosocial challenges not only in the school setting but extend to the home environment. It was revealed that some of the challenges that they face were social challenges (poverty, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, violence/ crime at school, gambling), academic challenges (poor studying, and time management skills), emotional and psychological challenges (feelings of loneliness, depressions). These challenges can't be viewed as separate from one another, thus have a negative impact on how learners academically perform and have an impact on their overall development.

Keywords: Psychosocial, Learners, Adolescence, Government Secondary School, Barriers to Learning, School Social Workers, Teachers

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DoE:	Department of Education
GDE:	Gauteng Department of Education
HoD:	Head of Department
HoDs:	Head of Departments
SBST:	School-Based Support Team
SSW:	School Social Worker
SSWs:	School Social Workers

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline of the background underlying this research, discusses the problem statement that spelt out the gaps that exist in the extant literature and proffers the rationale for conducting this study. This chapter also provides an outline of the specific research questions, aims and objectives of the study, as well as the definitions of the key concepts that were applied to this study.

1.2 Background

In developing countries, particularly those in the African region; sexual abuse and teenage pregnancy are rife, and these social ills have been attributed to high poverty rates (Mugabe, Chingombe & Chinyoka, 2016; Collings, 2009). Sexual abuse has been identified as an experience embedded in a range of risk factors like poverty and this phenomenon arguably impacts the academic performance of learners. In a study conducted in Zimbabwe on grade 7 learners; Mugabe, Chingombe and Chinyoka (2016) noted that children who have experienced child sexual abuse may suffer from various psychosocial factors such as anxiety, depression, dissociation, hostility, and anger among others. Statistics in southern Africa shows that about 100 girls were reported to experience sexual abuse daily in Zimbabwe, while it is believed that in every 26 seconds, women and girls are raped in South Africa and every 60 seconds in Namibia (Mugabe, Chingombe & Chinyoka, 2016; Smythe, 2015). This sexual vulnerability has not been restricted to young girls only as there is prevailing evidence that young boys are also falling victims of sexual abuse at the hands of older men and women (Collings, 2009). Hlupo and Tsikira (2012) as cited in Mugabe, Chingombe and Chinyoka (2016) described the effects of child sexual abuse as negative owing to its undesirable impacts on the youngster's social and interpersonal functioning. Also, the literature suggests that learners who have experienced sexual abuse suffer psychologically and socially and often experience severe disorders (Collings, 2009).

Poverty and the family's low socio-economic status greatly impact the psychosocial wellbeing of adolescents. Extant literature highlights that there is a clear and strong correlation between poverty and low-quality education in South Africa (Romero, Hall, Cluver & Steinert, 2018). Poor families are more likely to send their children to poor-quality schools with either poor or lack of proper infrastructure and effective support services. Due to South Africa's history of apartheid, the prevalent socioeconomic woes cannot be explained outside of race. Van der Berg

(2008) highlighted that the black South African adolescents, the majority of whom live in poverty, are six times more likely to repeat grades than white adolescents. Apart from the under-privileges that these youngsters and their families are still subjected to, the community context alongside the geographic location (i.e., risky areas, violence, HIV/ AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy) of the school also plays a crucial role in the academic performance, grade progression and personal development of the adolescents, thus, determining their future outcomes (Hunter & May, 2003; Inglis & Lewis, 2013; Ramulumo & Pitsoe, 2013).

Adolescence is a critical period for all individuals and profoundly influences how they grow into adults. The population of adolescents may be classified into two groups; the early adolescents - aged between 10-14 years and the late adolescents - aged between 15-19 years (UNICEF, 2011). Shukla (2010) stated that as children grow to become adults, the expectations from their parents and/or their elders also increases. The transition that happens during this period is complex and is associated with various psychosocial challenges (Calder & Huda, 2013). Psychosocial challenges are issues related to the psychological and social life of an individual (Plenty & Mood, 2016). Several aspects have been identified as the contributory factors to these challenges, for example, the increasing transitional social roles/responsibilities, peer group relations, health-related problems, family dimensions and socio-economic problems. The adolescents' experiences of these challenges play out within the home and school environment (Conger, Conger & Martin, 2010; Plenty & Mood, 2016).

It has been reported that various stakeholders need to be involved in the process of combating these challenges; and this includes, but is not limited to, health and social services professions, communities, and government (Adelman & Taylor, 2012). While the role of communities and government may be easily identified, the roles of health care and social services professions are not always clearly identified or seen as important in school settings. School social workers, school counsellors and educational psychologists continue to be deployed to many schools across the world to improve the learners' psychosocial wellbeing (Moore-Thomas & Lent, 2007; Protivnak, Mechling & Smrek, 2016). The literature on the involvement of such professionals in schools in developing countries is limited (Pawar, 2014; Tsui, & Yan, 2010). Unlike in developed countries, children in developing and emerging countries are more in need of counselling services as there are high rates of dropouts, failure rates, teenage pregnancies, violence, and they tend to receive less psychological and social support from their families

(Huan et al, 2014). In South Africa, only a few school social workers are deployed to government schools, and if they are, they become responsible for large numbers of schools, thus making it difficult to tackle all psychosocial issues faced by adolescents. Therefore, it is important to explore those psychosocial challenges that adolescents encounter, with particular focus on the government secondary schools.

1.3 Statement of the Problem and Rationale of Study

The period of early and late adolescence is marked by numerous challenges related to the child's physical, emotional, and social development. These psychosocial challenges have a great impact on the overall functioning and scholarly performance of adolescents. In South Africa, education participation rates by learners are high with more than 97.8 percent of children aged between grade one to grade nine (Statistics South Africa, 2003, 2008). This is partly because school attendance has been made compulsory -for these grades. However, there is still a growing concern about the high dropout rates post grade nine pupils. This implies that after grade nine, many pupils are "leaving education without obtaining a minimal credential" (De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot, & van den Brink, 2013, p. 1) - the minimum credential being a Matric certificate which is obtained upon completion of grade 12. It is reported that high numbers of school dropouts occur in grades 10-12, resulting in 50 percent of the cohort from grade 9 being registered for grades 10 and 11 (Hartnack, 2017). These figures, according to Hartnack (2017), are concerning considering that in the year 2014, approximately 36 percent of learners from the same grade one enrolment cohort made it to Matric.

Owing to several learners dropping out before obtaining minimum credentials, this has exacerbated the high rates of unemployment amongst the youth which has invariably resulted in wider racial inequalities in terms of matric attainment (Spaull, 2013). This problem of school dropout has significant and undesirable impacts not only on the economic productivity of the country (Gauge, 2015) but also on the learners' psychosocial functioning and health (Lamb & Markussen, 2011).

Furthermore, it has been reported that other factors associated with adolescents' school dropout include their engagement in risky behaviours such as the use of harmful substances (e.g., alcohol, marijuana and tobacco), premature sexual activities resulting in high rates of teenage pregnancies and sometimes contracting sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, engaging and perpetuating violence as well as involvement in toxic social groups among

others(Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Chetty & Pather, 2015; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016; Lamb & Markussen, 2011; Monali & Gonzalez, 2012; Pinnock, 2016; Weybright, Caldwell, Xie, Wegner, & Smith, 2017). Furthermore, adolescents' school dropout decisions are sometimes influenced by poverty, poor resources at schools and learners' poor mental health (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016).

The above discussion provides reasons for concern if South Africa wants to inculcate behaviours for good citizenry in its youth to positively impact the functioning of the country. This research was undertaken to portray the challenges faced by adolescents in government secondary schools through exploring their experiences on specific psychosocial challenges. In addition, it was conducted to investigate factors that contribute to these challenges and determine the type of support that is available in schools for adolescents in government secondary schools to help relevant stakeholders in taking corrective action, if necessary.

It is also hoped that the findings of this study will help in raising awareness about learners' psychosocial challenges in schools in Johannesburg, further contribute to the body of knowledge about psychosocial challenges experienced by pupils, particularly in public schools, meaningfully influence the existing procedures designed to proffer support services to adolescents and help in devising or improving existing school programmes that seek to constructively address the psychosocial challenges that learners might be experiencing.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the psychosocial challenges experienced by secondary school learners in South African government schools in Johannesburg?
2. What are teachers' perceptions on how psychosocial challenges influence learners' performance?
3. How do school social workers think psychosocial support services should be rendered to secondary school learners?

1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

The aims of the study were two-fold:

1. To explore the psychosocial challenges experienced by grade 10-12 learners in two Johannesburg government schools.

2. To explore the perceptions of teachers and social workers on how psychosocial challenges and psychosocial support services can influence learners' performance and wellbeing.

The objectives of the study were:

1. To comprehend the psychosocial challenges experienced by grade 10 to 12 learners in two Johannesburg government schools.
2. To explore the perceptions of grade 10-12 learners about the factors contributing to the psychosocial challenges they are experiencing.
3. To find out how grade 10-12 learners perceive the psychosocial support services available at their schools.
4. To explore the perceptions of teachers on how psychosocial challenges affect grade 10-12 learners' performance.
5. To explore the views of social workers on how psychosocial support can be rendered to grade 10-12 learners in government schools in the South of Johannesburg.
6. To recommend practical guidelines for teachers and social workers to assist government secondary school learners in dealing with psychosocial challenges.

1.6 Relevance of the Study to Basic Education Department and Department of Social Development

This research study was deemed relevant to the Department of Basic Education and Department of Social Development as it sought to raise awareness about psychosocial challenges faced by learners in government schools in South Africa, with a particular focus on Johannesburg. Through this study, psychosocial challenges faced by learners were outlined and an understanding of their causes and effects was provided. Such information was deemed essential particularly - to education policymakers, principals, teachers, school social workers and all the other stakeholders involved in the upbringing of a child while at school. Awareness of the information on psychosocial challenges of learners in grades 10-12 will possibly lead to strengthening or implementation of better support services for learners, reinforcement or formulation of new projects that will contribute to the learners' psychosocial wellbeing, while simultaneously influencing the existing procedures on learner-related support services.

1.7 Brief Description of Methodology and Methods of the Study

This study made use of a qualitative research approach and an exploratory research design. The study was conducted in the south of Johannesburg in two schools that belong to Gauteng

Department District 11. A sample of 22 learners in grades 10-12, 3 teachers and 3 school social workers were selected using purposive sampling. A structured open-ended survey was developed and given to learners to complete while semi-structured interview guides were used to direct the telephonic interviews (due to Covid 19 lockdown restrictions) with teachers and school social workers. To stay within the stipulated Covid 19 restrictions, the structured open-ended surveys were given to teachers who in turn handed them out to learners who were interested in participating in this research. After completing the open-ended surveys, learners took screenshots of their responses and sent them to the researcher. When all the responses were collated, the researcher transcribed the responses from telephonic interviews. Thereafter, it became possible to analyse the data from all participants using thematic analysis.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

1. Research design: owing to the shortcomings of the chosen research method and sampling technique, it was not possible to generalise the findings of this study to other similar research contexts.
2. Sample: only three teachers from School 1 participated in the research study.
3. Research data collection method: most learners from school 2 left some questions unanswered.

1.9 Definition of Concepts

1.9.1 Adolescence

Adolescence is a period in life when a person is no longer a child, but not yet an adult and progressing to become one that is characterized by physical and psychological development and independence from parents and caregivers (Brizio, Gabbatore, Tirassa, & Bosco, 2015; Casey, Duhoux, & Cohen, 2010; Timalsina, Kafle, & Timalsina, 2018).

1.9.2 Barriers to learning

Barriers to learning denote the extrinsic problems that are encountered within the education system as a whole and within the learning environment, together with the intrinsic difficulties that occur within the learners, which ultimately prevents their access to learning and learner development (The Education Information Standards, 2010).

1.9.3 Government secondary school

This is a public secondary school that provides schooling to learners from grade 8-12, with instructions being more organised strictly along subject lines and is managed directly or indirectly by the Department of Education, or a governing board appointed by the government

or elected by public citizens (Department of Basic Education, 2010; OECD, 2012; The Education Information Standards, 2010).

1.9.4 Learner

In light of this study, a learner is any person between the ages of approximately between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years, obtaining education or is obliged to obtain schooling in terms of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996).

1.9.5 Psychosocial

Psychosocial refers to the influence and interrelations between the psychology of a person and the social factors and behaviours (Vizzotto, de Oliveira, Elkis, Cordeiro, & Buchain, 2013; Taylor & McAvoy, 2015; Singh-Manoux, 2003; Guyon, Falissard, & Kop, 2017).

1.9.6 School social worker

School social workers are trained professionals working in school systems to provide critically important services related to the psychosocial well-being of learners to enhance and improve their emotional well-being and their academic performance (Constable, 2008; Finigan-Carr & Shaia, 2018; National Association of School Social Workers, 2010).

1.9.7 Teacher

Also referred to as an educator, is any person who imparts knowledge to learners or provides professional educational services at a school level (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

1.10 The organisation of the research report

This research report was structured into 5 inter-related chapters which focused on the different processes of the research - to ultimately answer the research questions that underpinned this study.

Chapter 1 introduced this study by outlining the background and statement of the problem, together with the rationale of this study. Thereafter, Chapter 2 outlined the theoretical grounding of this study while simultaneously providing a detailed account of related literature on psychosocial challenges experienced by adolescents in a school setting. Chapter 3 discussed the methodology that befitted this study which essentially outlined that this study employed an interpretive paradigm and subjective ontology that was aligned to the qualitative technique. The methodology of this study further specified that a non-probability purposive sampling was used in this study and data was collected through an open-ended survey structured as written interviews that were complemented by semi-structured telephonic interviews. It is worth noting that after all interview transcripts were done, the gathered data was analysed through a close

examination of the common themes, patterns, topics, ideas that came up repeatedly from different respondents. Chapter 4 was reserved for the presentation and discussion of the research findings from thematic analysis. Finally, Chapter 5 concluded this study by discussing the findings from this research and putting everything into context, while noting the contributions, recommendations, limitations, and directions for future research endeavours.

1.11 Summary of Chapter

This chapter provided a background of this study by highlighting that adolescence is a complex stage where learners experience various psychosocial challenges. These psychosocial challenges may be caused by experiences that learners endure (e.g., poverty, sexual abuse) from their varied environments. Extant literature suggests that there is little involvement of health care workers and social services workers in schools, particularly in developing and emerging countries. From a South African perspective, evidence exists to justify that there is a shortage of school social workers that render valuable services to learners, and this, unfortunately, has resulted in many learners failing to receive the much-needed psychological and social support. The problem statement revealed that there exists a gap in the literature on psychosocial challenges that young adults face and this further provided the rationale of this study as it sought to fill the lacuna that exists within the extant literature by contributing meaningfully to both theory and practice. From the purpose of this study, the research questions, main aims and objectives of the study were derived and linked to the justification of this study, the relevance of the study to the Department of Basic Education and Department of Social Development was also outlined. This chapter was concluded by providing a high-level outline of the description of methodology and methods used, limitations of the study and the concepts that were utilised during the research. The following chapter outlines the theoretical framework that underpinned this study as well as the review of the literature relevant to this study.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework that guided this research (i.e., Resilience theory as explained by Van Breda (2018) and Ungar (2015, 2019)) and reviews various perspectives on adolescence literature and related psychosocial aspects. The theoretical framework that grounded this study offers a meaningful understanding of how learners, or rather adolescents respond to adversities that they encounter through different recovery mechanisms that promote individual well-being and mental health like resilience. The review of literature will present current knowledge on the concept of adolescence and provide substantive findings from previous scholars together with their theoretical and methodological contributions to this topic. This section will be complemented by a discussion on various psychosocial challenges practically faced by secondary school-going learners. In this chapter, attention is also drawn to the literature on the South African education system, the psychosocial support services available to support school-going learners, as well as the role of school social workers. Moreover, this study will explicate some of the relevant legislation related to adolescents and their educational rights.

2.2 Resilience Theory

The Resilience theory was conceptualised by Garmezy (1973) as a strength-focused approach or conceptual framework that seeks to understand how some people survive, recover, and even thrive after experiencing adverse situation(s). Other scholars have opined that human resilience is the capacity for biopsychosocial systems to navigate to the necessary resources in a way that inculcates and sustains positive individual functioning under stressful situations and adversities (e.g., Ungar 2015, 2019) This implies that the Resilience theory is essentially about the mediating processes that enable the biopsychosocial systems to achieve better-than-expected outcomes in the wake of adversity (Van Breda, 2018). While individuals try to achieve a desirable outcome, Van Breda (2018) explained that at the heart of Resilience theory is the resilience process that mediates between the three factors: adversity, outcome and process. This resilience process is similar to Ungars (2019)’s three dimensions of studies of resilience which include risks exposure, desired outcomes and the promotive and protective factors and processes (PPFP).

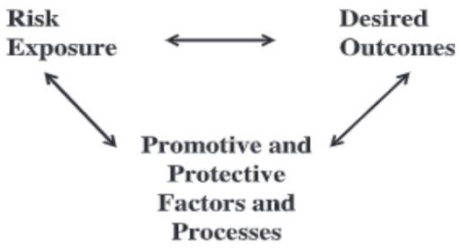


Figure 1: Three Dimensions of Resilience

In light of youngsters, resilience should not be limited to personal invulnerability to respond to the stressors or risk exposures but must also include an individual's and the capacity of his or her social and physical ecologies to meaningfully stimulate their culturally bound coping strategies (Ungar, 2015). Resilience theory urges that the social and physical ecologies are important in the development of a child as these can either threaten their development or be the source of their capacity to deal with several diversities (Ungar, 2015). Stressors and risk exposure occur at multidimensional levels and ecological levels (i.e., biosystem, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem). The biosystem involves the biological traits factors and traits that influence cognitive, emotional and physical functioning, the microsystem relates to the interaction between the children and their family members, social groups and other support groups (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Ungar, 2011), the mesosystem involves interaction supportive structures such as the social services; child health care and education can act as coping mechanisms for stressors/ adversity, the exosystem related to the social processes that have the potential to shape the microsystem and mesosystem). While the macrosystem related to the larger community that creates favourable conditions for the development of a child such as values, belief systems and social policies (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Ungar, 2011), and the chronosystem involves the socio-historical period the stress is being experienced and the child's developmental stage and age (Ungar, 2011). Resilience theory was deemed appropriate to act as a foundation upon which this study was built owing to its ability to provide a better understanding of how children achieve desired outcomes in the wake of challenges and stressors occurring at the different ecological and biopsychosocial levels. Furthermore, it offers a guideline on how these different already-mentioned ecological and biopsychosocial systems involved in the development of a child can act as stressors and sources for effectively responding to experienced challenges, strains or tensions.

2.3 Adolescence: Conceptualising adolescence and its theories

Adolescence was first pioneered by the theorist Hall (1904) who first defined it as a unique stage of development, characterised periods of heightened 'storm and stress, that involves constant conflict, mood changes as well as risk-taking behaviour. He further indicated that adolescents tend to question and contradict people around them due to their mood disruptions and high propensity for antisocial and reckless behaviour (Arnett, 1999). Hall (1904) surmised that behaviours associated with this stage are universal, i.e., they are, to a large extent, experienced by all youth across different cultures and demographics. Extant literature has further added to this initial conceptualisation by highlighting that adolescence is the period from the ages of 10 to 19 years, whereby the transition from childhood to adulthood occurs (Pandey & Agarwal, 2013; Timalsina, Kafle & Timalsina, 2018). This period is marked by a tremendous pace in growth and change in physical, emotional, and cognitive development. It has been reported in previous studies that the adolescents' population is approximately 1.2 billion in the world, which equates to roughly 16 per cent of the total world population (UNICEF, 2017). Existing evidence suggests that of that 1.2 billion, 90 percent of adolescents reside in developing countries (UNICEF, 2012). Statistics South Africa (2018) reported that adolescents make up 18.5 percent of the South African population, with most of them residing in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal. Gauteng and Western Cape were reported to have the lowest number of adolescents partly because most of these youngsters still live under the watchful eye of their parents – in rural areas of the country. The majority of adolescents were reported amongst the Black Africans (19.3 %) and Coloured (18 %) racial groups, while Indian (14 %) and White (12 %) racial groups represented the lowest figure of adolescents (Statistics South Africa, 2018). The fact that the majority of the youngsters are Black Africans can be explained by the prevailing demographic distribution of the country's population, which is largely skewed to the black aborigines.

Adolescence is also a period that is characterised by biological changes associated with the process of puberty which essentially relates to a time of significant physical, psychological, and emotional changes for young people in their journey to adulthood (Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, 2013). Puberty occurs from the age of around 10 years and continues through to adolescence. Its onset is influenced by biological traits, genetics, nutrition, and social factors among others and its process is triggered by the different hormones that evolve to ensure reproduction and parenting success. Besides bodily changes, Bogin (2011) argued

that human beings are also cultural beings, meaning that all facets of human life are infused in social context factors like social influence, social identity, social representation that creates meaning to individuals. The combination of the biological changes and social significance associated with the process of puberty makes it important for adolescents to follow the right path that is socially accepted. Therefore, through social meaning, the youth learn and become conversant about the widely acceptable behaviours in their societies to avoid social censure (i.e., when they go against social values) and also circumvent and effects of cognitive dissonance (i.e., thoughts or beliefs that are inconsistent with that of the society).

Adolescence is described in three different stages: early, middle, and late adolescence (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). During all these stages, adolescents experience some form of development as they continue to discover their own identity while progressively learning to become adults. The focus of this study was directed primarily to the middle and late adolescence stages. These stages were deemed to be important by (Zarrett & Eccles, 2006) "for setting the stage for continued development through the life span as individuals begin to make choices and engage in a variety of activities that are influential on the rest of their lives" (p. 13). There have been inconsistent submissions from previous scholars on the age ranges that denote the adolescence period, for example, World Health Organisation defined adolescents as individuals in the 10-19 years age group (Dick & Ferguson, 2015), while Erikson (1968) argued that adolescence period ranges from 13 to 18 years of age. Erikson (1968) further defined this stage as identity versus role confusion as the adolescents are faced with tasks of developing their sense of self-continuity inclusive of thinking about their future occupation (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009; Erikson, 1968). In addition, this includes shaping one's sexual identity; what to do, and how to develop into an appropriate sex role. Success in identity formation results in psychosocial strength of fidelity, which is commitment and acceptance of self (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009). Failure to develop self-identity may lead to role confusion, individual frustration and feelings of incompleteness.

Rousseau (1910) suggested that during the period of adolescence, teenagers need guidance and safety as their ultimate focus rests solely on identity development, social concerns, and morality. Change in humour, frequent anger, to having a constantly agitated mind coupled with unmanageable behaviours are some of the other characteristics of this transitional period (Rousseau, 2010). Unlike Rousseau (2010), whose description of adolescence captured the

physical, social, emotional and physiological changes and experiences of adolescents, Freud (1958) focused on the development of the adolescents from a psychosexual perception. Applicable to the adolescents are the latency and genital stages. The latency stage occurs during the middle and late adolescence periods and involves hidden sexual urges, directing attention to recreation, school and social relationships, behaving morally in the society, continuously forming a bond with parents and peers, developing a sense of competence and wanting to excel. While the genital stage is marked by complexities in sexual urges, creating and displaying sexual bonds with the opposite and sometimes with same-sex outside their families (i.e., youngsters start to give cues about their sexual orientation), socialisation, vocational planning and preparation (Rousseau, 2010).

Neto (2015) suggested that self-actualisation (when a person strives to reach his full potential) may be responsible for the variance among individuals' motivation in an academic setting (Mertens, Anfara, & Caskey, 2007). Drawing from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, various lower-order needs (i.e., physiological, safety, love and belonging and self-esteem needs) must be met before an individual can successfully achieve his or her self-actualisation needs (i.e., higher-order needs) (Maslow, 1954). It is unlikely that a teenager may achieve their full potential if these basic needs are not met, and when met, adolescents make the most of their abilities by embracing reality, while simultaneously enjoying solving problems and judging without having preconceived notions (Maslow, 1954; Mertens, Anfara & Caskey, 2007).

2.4 The psychosocial issues faced by secondary school learners

Extant literature suggests like the main psychosocial issues experienced by adolescents include, but are not limited to, sexual behaviours, poverty, substance use and abuse, mental health challenges, crime and bullying and violence in schools (e.g., Phelan, Yu & Davidson, 1994; Timalsina, Kafle & Timalsina, 2018). These issues will be discussed in detail in the next sub-section.

2.4.1 Sexual behaviours

Sexual behaviour incorporates all activities done to gratify a person's sexual needs (Chawla & Sarkar, 2019). Sexual behaviours have been studied in the context of sexual practices like masturbation, sexual romantic relationships, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and infections (STIs), reproductive health, and contraception (Schuster, Mermelstein & Wakschlag, 2013). A study conducted in Sweden investigated the development of sexuality

during early and late adolescence and submitted that both girls and boys became sexually active during adolescence (Holmberg & Hellberg, 2005). Part of the results indicated that from the ages of 13 to 15 years, boys and girls had romantic experiences while between the ages of 16 and 18, the majority of the girls reported having had sexual intercourse. About 8% of the older girls fell pregnant while in senior secondary school. Teenage sexual behaviours are usually accounted for through factors like hormonal behaviours, brain physiology, sexual preference and psychosocial factors such as the use of alcohol, engaging in risky behaviours, creating problems in school (e.g., bullying others) and being involved in premature romantic relationships (Pringle et al., 2017).

Risky sexual behaviour among teenagers has led to a rise in teenage pregnancy across the globe. According to the statistics presented by the World Health Organisation in 2014, about 16 million girls aged between 15 and 19 years and approximately one million girls younger than 15 years give birth every year, signalling the prevalence of overly hasty sexual relationships amongst youngsters. In South Africa, the statistics indicated that between 65% and 71% of the pregnancies amongst the youth are unplanned. The number of teenage pregnancies accounted for over the past years, between 2011 and 2013, seems to be increasing as compared to the statistics recorded in the early 2000s (Maharaj, Kaufman, & Richter, 2000; Grant & Hallman, 2008). In a report given by Statistics South Africa (2015), as cited in Ngunyulu et al (2016), it was found that "the number of schoolgirls who fall pregnant in South Africa increased from 68 000 in 2011, 81 000 in 2012 to 99 000 in 2013" (p. 343). With these continuously skyrocketing numbers, it is clear that teenage pregnancy is a social issue, and its impacts are felt not only on the developmental side of the youth as well as their families and communities but also on the social economy of a country at large.

There seems to be a consistent positive trend between the relationship that the youth have with their academics and their sexual activeness (Pringle et al., 2017). Panday et al, (2009) established that this relationship could influence the youth's sexual behaviours and further argued that when youngsters are feeling a strong connection to their schooling and perform well, they are less likely to fall pregnant (Panday et al, 2009). In contrast, school accomplishment, academic achievement and greater ambitions for education offer incentives for adolescents to avoid engaging in sexual activities that are more likely to result in their pregnancy (Kirby, 2002; Santelli, Lowry, Brener & Robin 2000). A study conducted by Santelli et al (2000) in the United States sought to determine the association between sexual

behaviours on individuals' socioeconomic status and established a strong link between youth pregnancy and poverty. Higher numbers of teenage pregnancies occurred amongst poor young women, as compared to higher-income young women. This further highlights that poverty can be a strong predictor of premature and risky sexual behaviours amongst adolescents.

2.4.2 Poverty

Poverty is a global issue and extreme poverty is a worldwide health problem (World Health Organisation, 2000). The extant literature does not provide a uniform definition of this concept, and its multidimensionality has also resulted in several conceptualisations around this variable (Von Maltzahn, 2006). While some take an income-based definition, others define and describe poverty through the lenses of circumstances of hardship or community disadvantage (Dashiff, DiMicco, Myers & Sheppard, 2009). For this research study, poverty is described as social exclusion, vulnerability, lack of satisfaction of basic needs, relative deprivation, marginalisation and low income (Von Maltzahn, 2006; Williams, 2015). The current poverty numbers in South Africa indicate that the nation is still battling with the issue of poverty and over half of South Africa's population (55.5%) lives in abject poverty and also displays signs of an unequal society (Statistics South Africa, 2014/15). These imbalances have largely been attributed to the aftermaths of apartheid that still haunts many of the citizens from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (Leibbrandt et al, 2010). Statistics South Africa (2020) indicates that 62.1 % of children in South Africa are multidimensionally poor with 67 % of children currently living in income-poor families. These statistics are slightly different to those that were recorded in 2017 which were 65% and showed that the children's household income was less than R1138 per month and only 30% of the children lived in a household where adults were unemployed (Hall, Richter, & Lake, 2018). Also, South African households exhibit how unequal the South African society is by indicating that only 25% of the children lived in nuclear families, 62% in extended family arrangements, 10% in a single-parent household and 2% lived with unrelated members (Statistics South Africa, 2016).

Living in poverty particularly harms the development of a child. Van der Berg, Taylor, Gustafsson, Spaull, and Armstrong (2011) highlighted that poorer children enter school with a cognitive disadvantage because they lack access to the resources and stimulation that children from elite families enjoy. While young children living in poverty may struggle with readiness for school and lack social skills, adolescents often achieve lower educational outcomes as they

struggle owing to being engulfed by social woes like poverty, which significantly and negatively impact their scholarly activities (Ferguson, Bovaird & Mueller, 2007; Williams, 2015). The risk factors resulting from poverty also include social and emotional challenges, acute and chronic stressors, lack of cognitive stimulation and the prevalence of immense health and safety issues (Williams, 2015). Based on Jensen's category of poverty, the types that apply to the context of South African families and seemingly affects the well-being of the adolescents are: generational poverty, absolute poverty, and relative poverty (Jensen, 2009). (Statistics South Africa, 2014/15). Generational poverty refers to poverty that is passed from one generation to another (e.g., the one that is a result of apartheid), absolute poverty refers to scarcity or lack of shelter, running water and food, while relative poverty refers to the family's income not being sufficient to meet the average standard of living (Jensen, 2009). Therefore, poverty impacts the functioning and development of school-going adolescents and makes them more vulnerable to failure in achieving the critical developmental processes.

2.4.3 Substance use and abuse

The issue of substance use is complex and poses a worldwide threat especially amongst young people (Olawole-Isaac, Ogundipe, Amoo, & Adeloye, 2018; Zastrow, Kirst-Ashman, & Hessenauer, 2019). Given that adolescence is marked by engagement in risky behaviours and heightened motivation to obtain arousal from rewards (Nock, Minnes & Alberts, 2017), the use of substances is high amongst adolescents. Literature indicates that substance use may lead to poor health, negative social consequences, and is associated with depression, personality disorders, unplanned sexual activities and involvement in crime (Mohasoa & Mokoena, 2017; Nock, Minnes & Alberts, 2017; Tshitangano & Tosin, 2016). A study done in Canada in 2008 and 2009 showed that 2.3 % of the pupil population between grades 10 to 12 had used heroin while in South Africa the numbers were 6.2 % (Tshitangano & Tosin, 2016). In a study conducted in 2010 in the United States of America, it was discovered that 1.3 % of the youth had used heroin in their lifetime (United Nations, 2011). In southern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, it has been reported that there is a growing number of the use of tobacco, heroin and alcohol intake among adolescents (Olawole-Isaac, Ogundipe, Amoo, & Adeloye, 2018).

Substance abuse amongst the youth in South African urban areas is higher than that of those in rural areas (Peltzer, Ramlagan, Johnson & Phaswana-Mafuya, 2010). A study conducted in Durban and Cape Town investigated the predictors of drug use among young people revealed

that teenagers were more likely to use drugs during their late adolescence stage (Brook, Pahl, Morojele, & Brook, 2006). The same study established that this high usage of drugs was skewed to male adolescents, who had experienced greater discrimination from their communities while others were more prone to experiencing greater intrapersonal distress such as depressive moods. In another study that focused on adolescents in Cape Town, it was found that the use of alcohol and tobacco was more prevalent amongst the Coloured population than Black or White populations (Amoateng, Barber, & Erickson, 2006).

In South Africa, there have been several factors that are presumed to influence adolescents' desire to use different substances and these might be structural injustices including race, economic status and gender discrimination; peer influences like pressure among adolescents and fears of being rejected if they resist taking drugs; family influences like parental use of substances and dysfunctional families; personal characteristics like unresolved personal issues as a result of traumatic losses, and poor coping skills in response to powerful emotions or psychological problems among others (Khumalo, 2016; Mohasoa & Mokoena, 2017; Zastrow, Kirst-Ashman, & Hessenauer, 2019). The use of substances amongst South African adolescents is cause for concern given that substance use contributes negatively to their development; both socially and mentally.

2.4.4 Mental health challenges amongst adolescents

Adolescents experience numerous biological, cognitive, physiological, psychological, emotional, and social changes. Not only do these changes impact how they interact with others in their social environment, but it also affects their health and well-being. Therefore, it is inevitable that some adolescents would experience mental health problems such as anxiety and depressive disorders during adolescence (World Health Organisation, 2012). The literature argues that the period of late adolescence to mid-20s is marked by higher rates of major depression (Copeland et al, 2014; Ford, Goodman & Meltzer, 2003; Reinherz, Paradis & Giaconia, 2003). Nzeadibe, Igboeli and Ajoero (2018) stated that the individuals that experience depression disorders or other forms of mental health challenges during the stage of adolescence often endure the same problems in their adulthood.

A Canadian study that was conducted to determine the predictors of major depression during childhood and adolescence to identify their impact on the transition to adulthood indicated that

"major depression occurring in the transition to adulthood has the potential of resulting in chronicity and impaired functioning later in adult life" (Reinherz et al, 2003, p. 2145). Furthermore, 23.2 % of the participants in the same study experienced major depression during their transition to adulthood and the predictors of later depression in the mid-20s were found to be related to their past experiences of substance abuse disorders, family history of depression, family composition and childhood family environments that were regarded as violent or lacked cohesiveness. Therefore, it is evident that the occurrence of depression and/or other mental health-related disorders amongst adolescents remains a strong predictor of mental health challenges and problems they face in their adulthood. In South Africa, the South African Stress and Health study indicated that approximately 20% of the youth suffer from depression and stress-related conditions every year (Nzeadibe, Igboeli & Ajoero, 2018).

2.4.5 Crime and violence in schools

School violence may be described as playground fights, vandalism and shooting among others (Meyer, 2005); as the exercise of power over others in the school setting (i.e., bullying) and the use of intentional physical and non-physical acts which results in physical or non-physical pain to other people while they are within the school premises (e.g., harassment) (Crawage, 2008; Prinsloo & Neser, 2007). In the United States, the Secret Service and the US Department of Education (Dumitriu, 2013; Paolini, 2015) reported that school violence, in the form of school shootings was rife, and the perpetrators ranged between the ages of 11 to 21 years. It was found that adolescents were responsible for the school shooting and were predominantly white males and a few white women, while 11 % were foreign students (Dumitriu, 2013). In India, a study on child abuse indicated that 45 % of the learner participants between the ages of 5 to 17 years had been beaten by the educators while 4% of those aged between 18 to 24 years reported that they had been sexually assaulted by the educators (Bolton, 2017).

School violence has become part of our everyday life; it is widespread and is caused by many different factors ranging from socio-economic factors, intolerance, absence of teachers, exposure to violent media, overcrowding, discrimination, violence in communities, etc. (Davids & Waghid, 2016). In a study conducted in South Africa by Burton (2008), it was discovered that 1.8 million pupils between grades three and twelve had experienced some form of violence, which included being assaulted, robbed and/or being sexually violated while in the school premises.

2.4.6 Bullying in schools

Bullying, as Nansel et al. (2001) note, is when certain individuals seek to intimidate, harm or coerce other people whom they perceive as vulnerable and has been recognised as a serious problem that affects the well-being and the social functioning of school-going children and adolescents. The definition of bullying is commonly agreed upon in literature and captures the following: it is a behaviour that is continuous or repetitive, it may be verbal or physical, it is done with the intent of causing psychological, emotional, and physical harm, and is usually between 2 or more people in which there are power dynamics with some individuals having more power than others (Liang, Flisher & Lombard, 2007; Nansel et al, 2001). Conflict and harassment within the vicinity of the school are not news to literature, but lately, it seems to pose a great threat to the development of children and adolescents (e.g., Liang et al., 2007). Naveed et al (2019) conducted a study examining the association of bullying experiences with depressive symptoms and psychosocial functioning among children and adolescents in rural Pakistan. This study revealed that both the victims and perpetrators of bullying experienced adverse psychological, emotional, and social consequences of the behaviour. Through various methods of data collection, it was found that the common perpetrators of bullying were girls. Existing evidence shows that the effects of bullying encompass "distress in life, including poor functioning in the area of schools, relationship with friends, family bonding and participation in leisurely activities" (Naveed et al, 2019, p. 3)

Within the South African context, more than one million learners in the country's schools experienced some form of violence (including bullying) towards them in 2002 (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).). While in 2012 a study on bullying in secondary schools indicated that about 34% of 3371 learners were victims of bullying (Unisa Bureau of Market Research, 2012). Some of the forms of bullying that learners professed to have experienced included emotional bullying and cyberbullying and being victimised physically. In all these acts of bullying, most of them were found to have transpired within the school vicinities, in class or after class. The statistics on bullying do not seem to have declined as more and more cases of school-related violence, which includes bullying and harassment, are always being reported on different media platforms (for example, Govender, 2021; Mayeza, 2021; Sain, 2021).

2.5 South African Education System

The South African nation is known for its diverse ethnic, racial and language groups and also for its unpleasant history tied to Apartheid. The apartheid system that "was designed to enforce racially-based inequality in spatial, social and economic terms" (Nel & Binns, 1999, p. 119), ended at the birth of a new dispensation in 1994, which was spearheaded by the African National Congress. Before 1994, separate educational institutions provided education based on racial grounds and education administration was managed by different departments. One of the features of the apartheid education system included Bantu education. It was an inferior system meant for Black people. Bantu education schools were low-budget institutions with large class sizes, high failure rates, lack of proper school resources, and high numbers of untrained/ qualified teachers (Enslin & Shirley, 1998; Nel & Binns, 1999; Engelbrecht, 2006; Chisholm, 2012).

The current education system is regulated, managed, and monitored by The Department of Basic Education (DBE) which oversees all schools from Grade R to Grade 12. The DBE aims to develop, maintain, and support a South African school education system and align it with current world-class standards (Tibane & Lentsoane, 2016). Literature shows that there are two types of public-school systems in South Africa; the smaller and better performing system which accommodates the wealthiest 20-25 % of the exceptional pupils as well as the larger and underperforming system which accommodates the 75-80 % of the South African pupil generation (Spaull, 2013). The differences between these systems lie in their geographical location, language, and socio-economic status of the school among others. For instance, a study conducted in 2007 revealed that grade three pupils from former-White schools scored higher on the same test than grade 5 pupils from former-Black schools, thus indicating the inequalities in the education provided in these different schooling systems (Spaull, 2013). Other issues noted in the South African education system include; high expenditure on the education budget, yearly low exam results, absenteeism, failure to improve the standard of teaching and learning, poor quality of education, low moral values, lack of discipline, high rates of violence in schools, poor performance in Maths and Literacy, overcrowded classrooms with unfair teacher-to-learner ratios and high dropout rates (DOE, 2009-2010; Maddock & Maroun, 2018; Modisaotsile, 2012; Mouton, Louw, & Strydom, 2013; Singh, 2016).

Additional to the two types of schools in the South African education system, there is also the quintile ranking of schools. Through the National Norms and Standards of School Funding

(NNSSF) (Republic of South Africa, 2012), schools are ranked into one of five quintiles and equity funding is provided based on their quintiles. These rankings are based on the community's circumstances of unemployment and literacy rates. The logic behind this is that schools located in poor communities or lower quintiles (1 to 3; no fees) should receive more financial support from the state as compared to schools in wealthier communities or upper rankings (4 and 5; fee-paying). van Dyk and White (2019) found that the implementation of the quintile ranking has not been effective as it has been found that school funding is inadequate and unfair, which has implications for the schools' maintenance, learning and teaching. If anything, this quintile ranking system has continued to contribute to the economic disparities between the rich and poor, and additionally, contribute to the unequal educational opportunities amongst the different learners and schools in different socioeconomic backgrounds (Spaull, 2015). Though such a system is a helpful tool for funding purposes, Mpofu (2015) alludes to that as it does not improve the learners' achievements.

2.6 Psychosocial support services in schools

2.6.1 Definition of psychosocial support

Psychosocial support is referred to as "a process of facilitating resilience within individuals, families and communities. Through respecting individuals' and communities' independence, dignity and coping mechanisms, psychosocial support promotes the restoration of social cohesion and infrastructure" (Christensen, 2008, p. 39-40). Successful management of the abovementioned psychosocial challenges depends on the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial assets of the learner as well as the social support available and the developmental settings in which the learner can explore and interact with these challenges.

In response to these challenges faced by learners, providing psychosocial support and care to them is important to safeguard their rights and wellbeing and enable them to attain age-appropriate developmental tasks (Ntinda, Maree, Mpofu, & Seec, 2014). Psychosocial support approaches are more suited for strengthening resilience, using local capacities, and promoting coping and positive development amongst adolescents (Mattingly, 2017). This form of support is best utilised by school social workers working in the field of education. Psychosocial support consists of various care and support interventions that include relevant stakeholders involved in the child's life. Some of these stakeholders include caregivers, family members, friends, neighbours, teachers, health care workers, and community members.

All schools have the responsibility to promote and ensure effective learning by creating a conducive and supportive learning environment for learners to feel appreciated, get taught a relevant curriculum through effective teaching strategies that complement learners' development e.g., personalised teaching techniques that seek to understand the uniqueness of every learner (Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla & Sylvester, 2014). This implies that there needs to be various support structures in place to ensure that learners are supported through their learning and that teachers too are supported through enhancing their processes of teaching (e.g., by ensuring that they receive adequate). The Department of Education highlights that proper educational support structures need to be strengthened and placed at the centre of teaching and learning to address the challenges of teaching and barriers to learning. This is likely to result in effective teaching that will enhance learners' academic performance, and their social and psychological well-being (Bojuwoye, Moletsane, Stofile, Moolla & Sylvester, 2014).

2.6.2 School-based support: Intervention programmes

Mental health conditions and challenges have a significant adverse impact on the school, social and family functioning and tend to increase the risk of suicide and substance use in adolescence (Lander, Howsare & Byrne, 2013; McKeague et al, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to improve children's mental health and experiences while in school. Literature suggests that one way of responding to this is through intervention and prevention programmes (McKeague et al, 2018; Stallards et al, 2014). Stallard et al (2013), researched the United Kingdom the anxiety prevention programmes meant to improve children and adolescents' resilience. The results of this study were positive and indicated the need to have such programmes to help learners. For such programmes to be successful and to have an effect on the learners and their mental health issues, they depend on how they are provided and delivered (individually or universally across the school) and who delivers them (teachers or the health care workers). Universal programmes are cost-efficient, less stigmatising, fit better with the complex school timetables and serve as a primary intervention as compared to individually targeted programmes (Stallards et al, 2014). However, they may not yield the same effect as individually targeted programmes engenders a better response to the challenges that a child is experiencing. Health care workers, in this regard, would include a school social worker, or educational psychologists, or school counsellors in a bid to fast track response and resolution of challenges faced by learners.

According to Calear and Christensen, (2010), health care workers tend to be more efficient than trained school staff members in delivering depression-related prevention programmes.

2.6.3 Nutrition

Poverty is one of the most significant barriers to learning and it affects the academic success of learners. Lack of proper nutrition or malnutrition amongst young people is one of the factors that signal poverty. In a study conducted by Maarnman (2009), it was found that learners who came from impoverished informal communities prioritised survival-related challenges over those relating to academic success, as they considered aspirations relevant to everyday survival such as food and clothes more important than education in the form of teaching and learning. The nutritional needs of learners must be taken seriously especially for schools located in areas where families are dysfunctional and cannot provide the necessary nutritional and basic needs of their children. According to UNICEF (2019), governments have the responsibility to promote healthy food environments within the school setting and encourage school feeding schemes and take preventative measures to avoid all forms of malnutrition. In South Africa, the National Programme of Action for Children (NPA), is an instrument by which these commitments to children are being carried out. "It is a mechanism for identifying all plans for children developed by government departments, non-governmental organisations and other child-related structures" (Murray & van Rensburg, 2004, p. 60). Part of the goal of the NPA is to ensure that children's malnutrition is swiftly responded to and the government has since come up with strategies that seek to alleviate hunger within the school settings.

The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) was established in 1994 by the Department of Health (and was later transferred to the Department of Education) centres around two objectives; food security (which looks at the nutritious status of school-going learners) and education (which looks at improving learner attendance and performance (Devereux et al., 2018). Part of its focus includes feeding schemes, nutrition education and sustainable food production (Devereux et al., 2018).

2.6.4 Role of school social workers

Carrell and Carrell (2006) explained that school counsellors and other student support services can have a positive impact on improving learners' academic outcomes. Excellent teachers know that they need to deploy numerous strategies to reach the learners and facilitate their

understanding of the content given. On the other hand, excellent school social workers know that they need to explore and draw on a wide range of skills and knowledge to best serve the learners and to help them understand themselves, the world around them better and build resilience in them (Finigan-Carr & Shaia, 2018). While according to Pretorius (2016), "school social workers have been a critical connection between the school, home and community with a focus on coordinating efforts by all participants in assisting learners to achieve their potential and becoming responsible citizens to the benefit of society" (p. 67). There is a clear link between the work done by teachers and that done by school social workers, and ultimately their work seeks to complement each other while at the same time enhancing the development of young people into becoming better citizens.

The skills and knowledge possessed by school social workers make them valuable professions that add to the effectiveness of the school system as they can take lead in prevention and promotion programmes, facilitate movements that aim to improve the school climate, promote healthy living and social-emotional learning (Finigan-Carr & Shaia, 2018). In addition to this, school social workers have the role to support the needs of learners that are at risk of attending public schools, for example, protecting the rights of foreign learners who are vulnerable to being victimised, bullied and mocked by local pupils (Altshuler & Webb, 2009). There is a lot that can be done by school social workers, however, in South Africa, the deployment of school social workers seems to be a challenge. Altshuler and Webb (2009), expressed that school social workers need to improve their "visibility, viability, and value" (p. 208). In South Africa, there is a shortage of school social workers and Pretorius (2016) highlighted that school social workers are scarce in the country to deal with problems faced by the majority of learners. It is argued that the limited number of school social workers poses a challenge to effectively render adequate services to learners and to also meaningfully engage the different key stakeholders on ways to better assist learners.

2.7 Relevant legislation, policies, procedures and guidelines

Education in South Africa is governed by various key legislations and policies. Some of the relevant regulations and procedures that are worth noting include The Constitution of South Africa (1996), South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support policy (SIAS) and Policy Framework on the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (2008).

The Constitution of South Africa is a transformative document that seeks to make South Africa a better and more democratic nation for all the people who live in this country, irrespective of their differences in race, language, sexual orientation, religious beliefs as well as foreigners (McConnachie, Skelton, & McConnachie, 2017). The right to basic education for all is entrenched in Section 29 of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution and requires the state to "protect, respect, promote and fulfil" the right to education for all children (UNESCO, 2000). Chürr (2015) explains that this is known to be one of the most crucial constitutional rights, particularly because it promotes economic and social well-being.

The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) highlights policies and structures that need to be followed concerning South African education. It makes it compulsory for parents, caregivers and guardians to ensure that their children attend school from the first day of school when the child reaches the age of 7 until the last day of school when the child reaches the age of 15 or when they complete their grade 9. In the country's efforts to redress past historical imbalances and ensure that every child gets an opportunity to attend school free of charge, the Schools Act of 2002 was amended by the Education Law Amendment Act of 2005 which declared schools in poverty-stricken areas as no fee-schools. This, however, has not successfully ensured that all learners receive free education based on their family's socioeconomic status, even though some may be attending no-fees schools. The consequence of this, according to Mestry (2013), is that parents end up sending their children to schools that are far away, so that they do not have to pay school fees owing to lack of money and other financial-related reasons.

The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) placed great emphasis on the importance and right to education in South Africa and has evolved to address various issues, notably, within the education sector. Currently, the document addresses issues related to; the organisation, governance and funding of schools, programmes for the transformation of secondary education, programmes for further education and training, meeting the challenges of early childhood development in South Africa, building inclusive education and training systems and lastly transforming learning and teaching through Information and Communications Technology (ICT) (Department of Basic Education, 2009).

In response to challenges faced by learners with special needs, while in mainstream schools, the education system initiated the Education Support Services (ESS). These services were advocated by The White Paper on Education and Training, Notice 196 of 1995 and also advocated for free education for learners with special education needs. “ESS encompasses all education-related health, social work, vocational and general guidance and counselling, and other psychological programmes and services, and services to learners with special education needs (LSEN) in mainstream schools” (Magampa, Sodi, & Sobane, 2018, p. 3)

The Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support policy (SIAS) is a policy document that aims to support ideologies of inclusive education in South Africa (Inclusive Education South Africa, 2019, October 30). The policy aims to respond to the needs of all South African learners, especially those that are vulnerable and are most likely to experience marginalisation and exclusion from our societies (Department of Education, 2014). Vulnerable learners also include those within ordinary and special needs schools and those that fall victim to issues such as family disruption, poverty, disability, inflexible curriculum and experience other negative factors which act as barriers to learning.

From a regional education point of view, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) developed the Policy Framework on the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning which addresses issues in the education system in the Southern African region and provides a basis for future action to be taken by Ministries of Education in promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights to education for all the children (van der Elst et al., 2012). This policy was developed on the understanding that education, social and economic development are interrelated, that is, education drives development, while at the same time it is dependent on the improvement of social and economic development.

2.8 Summary of Chapter

This chapter outlined and discussed the theoretical framework that underpinned and guided this study i.e., the Resilience theory. It further provided a discussion of literature relevant to this study. For example, literature was reviewed on aspects relating to adolescence, secondary school-going learners and the challenges faced by adolescence. This chapter also paid particular focus to the South African education systems (from the apartheid years to post-1994) and detailed some of the psychosocial support services provided in the public schools.

Currently, within the South African education system, the legacy of apartheid still exists and continues to impact how the basic education system operates. This was supported by noting that currently there exist 2 different schooling systems; one meant to cater for the majority of South African children which is synonymous to poor quality education resulting in sub-standard exam results, high absenteeism, among others, and on the other end is the schooling system that caters for the minority i.e., children coming from elite families, which are predominantly white. The review of literature also indicated that adolescence is not an easy phase or human development stage that children go through, i.e., it is complex and thus supports services need to be put in place to help relevant stakeholders proactively and swiftly respond to challenges that adolescents face. Despite their limited availability in school premises, this chapter also underscored the importance of having school social workers owing to the vital role they play in assisting learners and schools to better cope with challenges that they experience. The following chapter will outline the research methodology that was applied in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an outline of the methodology used in this research study is provided. The chapter will include the following: research approach and design, description of the population, sample and sampling procedures used, a discussion on the methods of data collection and data analysis used and lastly, a discussion outlining the trustworthiness process followed and ethical considerations applied during the process of the research study is provided.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

The research study followed a qualitative research approach embedded in interpretivism and constructivism paradigms. According to Shah and Al-Bargi (2013), the interpretative paradigm is considered constructivist, naturalist and humanistic. It is argued by Thomas (2010, p. 301) that "interpretivism often addresses essential features of shared meaning and understanding whereas constructivism extends this concern with knowledge as produced and interpreted". These paradigms were and are applicable to this research study as it was concerned about the participants' subjective experiences and realities; their social constructs and attached meanings.

A qualitative research approach was chosen to explore the psychosocial challenges of grade 10-12 secondary school learners and through this approach, the research study attempted to make sense of, or interpret the meaning attached to those certain things or the meanings connected with the participants' actions and experiences (Burns & Groves, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This approach was selected as it allowed for the researcher to explore how learners experience aspects of their lives within the school setting and in their home setting (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015). Additionally, it allowed the researcher to examine the events that occur in the school and home setting that are likely affecting the psychosocial functioning of the learners.

In this study, an exploratory multiple case study design was used. This design is defined as an in-depth examination and analysis of a person, groups, social phenomenon, policies, social institutions, and other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods (Babbie, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Thomas, 2011). Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that a multiple case study explores real-life multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through a data

collection process that is detailed and in-depth involving multiple sources of information which in this study would be the two different schools in Johannesburg South. This design was ideal as this research used two different secondary schools to explore what the learners' psychosocial challenges are, which also allowed for clarification of results and verification of the data obtained.

3.3 Population

"Population refers to the set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied" (Shukla, 2020). The population of this study included learners, teachers and school social workers. These groups of units possess variable characteristics i.e., experiences as learners or experiences as educational/ supportive professionals in a school setting. The learners included were in grades 10-12 in the two selected government schools in the South of Johannesburg, the teachers were Heads of Department (HODs) in grades 10-12 in the two selected schools as they engage with the learners and have insight into what happens in their lives and observe them daily during school hours. In addition, the school social workers (SSW) were from the Department of Social Development (DSD) who have been deployed to render support services in schools in the South of Johannesburg also formed part of the population.

3.4 Sample

A sample is defined as a subset of the individuals in a population (Hanlon & Larget, 2011). The envisaged research samples included three participant groups, namely, thirty learners in grades 10-12 (15 learners per school), six HODs of grades 10-12 (3 teachers per school) and three DSD school social workers who are deployed to render support services in schools in the South of Johannesburg falling under District 11. These samples helped realise the aims and objectives of this study. The decision on the sample size for the learners was made based on recommendations that qualitative research samples should be large enough to yield new and rich-textured information and understanding of the phenomenon being studied, but small enough to allow for deep, case-oriented analysis (Sandelowski, 1995). While for the HODs and school social workers, it was decided upon as there is only one HOD per grade and less than six school social workers placed in the Johannesburg South schools. Due to difficulties experienced with recruiting participants, only 22 learners, three HOD teachers (all from the first school) and three school social workers were involved in this study. The use of these

groups allows for triangulation as the research study yielded rich data from different types of samples and captured different perspectives, ideas, and experiences on the research topic.

The learners' participant group were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Any gender between the ages of 15 and 19 years and in grades 10-12 at the two schools.
2. Had attended either of the two schools since grade eight.
3. Ability to read and write to complete the open-ended survey (structured as a written interview).
4. Those under 18 years of age who had received consent from parents/guardians to participate in the study.
5. Those under the age of 18 years, who gave assent to participate in the study.
6. Those older than 18 years who have given consent to participate in the study.

The HOD teachers' participant group were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Participants of any gender and have been in the HoD position at the particular school for more than one year before the recruitment to the study.
2. Ability to communicate in English.

While the social workers' participant group were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Social workers who had been in the employment of DSD for at least six months before the recruitment to the study.
2. Social Workers who had been deployed by DSD to render social work services in schools in the South of Johannesburg.

3.5 Sampling Procedure

Upon receiving permission from the following institutions, the Wits HREC (Non-medical) (Appendix A), Gauteng Department of Social Development (DSD) (Appendix B), Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) (Appendix C) and the two selected schools (Appendix D and E) data collection commenced. Different procedures were followed to invite participants from the three different participant groups during the last half of the year 2020. Due to COVID19 and the national lockdown regulations, this process was not easy and was rather long, below are details about this and how challenges related to the recruitment process were overcome.

Purposive sampling was used for the recruitment of all research participants. This is referred to as a non-probability sampling technique and is the most commonly used sampling technique in qualitative studies to recruit participants who have the required experience and special knowledge needed for the research study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). The learners' samples were recruited to participate in the study because of their personal psychosocial experiences while the teachers and school social workers samples were recruited because of their experiences of providing services to the learners and the special knowledge that they hold about learners' psychosocial experiences.

Grade 10-12 Learners

Upon being granted permission by the Gauteng Department of Education and by the respective schools, the researcher employed services of one teacher per school to assist with the sampling process. This involved introducing the research study to learners in grades 10-12 using the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendix F) which outlined the aims and objectives of the study, research process and ethical consideration. Additionally, the assent (Appendix I) and consent (Appendix J) forms were explained, and information about the open-ended survey, structured as a written interview (Appendix K), they were required to complete if they choose to participate in the study was also discussed. Learners interested in participating were given a research kit which included this participant information sheets for potential participants and their parents/ caregivers, and consent and assent forms (Appendix F - K). All documents in the research kit were in English and learners were informed to contact the researcher if they needed documents in IsiZulu or Sesotho.

Grade HoD Teachers

To recruit participants, the researcher requested from the principal the names and contact details of all the grade 10-12 HoD teachers who met the inclusion criteria. The researcher informed the teachers about the research study and invited them to participate using the PIS (Appendix L). Telephonic interviews were scheduled with all teacher participants that were interested in participating and consent forms (Appendix M) were sent to them via WhatsApp. On the date and time agreed upon for the interview, the research called the teacher participants individually and utilised the interview guide (Appendix N) to facilitate the interviews.

School Social Workers

The researcher contacted one DSD social worker manager to obtain a list of social workers rendering psychosocial support to government schools in Johannesburg. Post this, permission was received from the DSD Head Office to conduct the study with social workers. Once permission was received, the researcher contacted the social work manager to inform her about the research study with three school social workers on the list that she had provided. The researcher contacted the school social workers individually and invited them to participate using the PIS (Appendix O). Telephonic interviews were scheduled with all school social work participants that were interested in participating and consent forms (Appendix P) were sent to them via WhatsApp. On the date and time agreed upon for the interview, the research called the school social work participants individually and utilised the interview guide (Appendix Q) to facilitate the interviews.

3.6 Research Instruments

A research instrument is defined as a tool used to collect or obtain, measure and analyse data related to the research subjects around the research topic (Trigueros, Juan, & Sandoval, 2017). Three different research instruments were deployed in this study. This includes an open-ended survey, structured as a written interview (Appendix K) for the learner participants and two different semi-structured interview guides; one for the HOD teachers (Appendix N) and one for the school social workers (Appendix Q) rendering support services to government schools in the South of Johannesburg. Questions in each guide were developed to yield sufficient information to achieve the study objectives.

An open-ended survey, structured as a written interview, was used to elicit qualitative data and allowed for the learner participants to respond freely with more options and opinions on the issues being studied (Albudaiwi, 2017; Leavy, Gnong & Ross, 2009). While the use of the two semi-structured interview guides was to “ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee; this provides more focus than the conversational approach, but still allows a degree of freedom and adaptability in getting the information from the interviewee” (Valenzuela & Shrivastava. , 2002, p. 4). The semi-structured interview guide approaches helped the researcher have a uniform structure to the questions asked for the different interviews systems. This allowed for the researcher to ask the same questions of the HoD teachers and school social worker participants and receive varying data from them.

Pre-testing was done for both the open-ended survey structured as a written interview and the two semi-structured interview guides. Hilton (2017, p. 1) explains that pre-testing "is a process of checking that the suggested guides work as 'intended' and are 'understood' by those participants that will be responding to them". Through this process, the researcher was able to test the different guides with a selected number of participants (i.e., one participant per guide). Based on the pre-testing, no changes were made to the guides. Specific details about the pre-testing process per participant group are as follows:

Learners

One learner per selected school was invited, through the teacher assisting with the sampling process to complete the open-ended survey structured as a written interview. The feedback from the learners indicated that questions were appropriate, and the learners understood and followed the instructions as detailed in the research tool. This pre-testing also alerted the researcher to consider providing data bundles for participants to complete the research process.

HoD Teachers and School Social Workers

One teacher who is Grade HoD for grade 8 from the one selected school was invited for a pre-testing interview. Additionally, a school social worker was also invited to participate in this process. Both the teacher and the school social worker pre-testing interview data were not included in the data of the research study. By pre-testing the different instruments, the researcher was able to determine if the questions yield information required to meet the objectives of the study and detect ambiguity of questions and discover possible flaws in questions of the open-ended survey and interview guides. This process helped establish that the time allocated to the telephonic interviews was enough, the phone volume needed to be raised to the fullest for the interviewees to be heard and an audio recorder could pick up what the interviewees were sharing and also helped ensure that participants could respond to the questions at hand.

3.7 Methods of Data Collection

Before data collection, consent and assent forms to participants were provided with the PIS and had to be completed by the different groups of participants. The learners' consent and assent were received formally while consent from the HoD teachers and school social workers was received verbally via telephonic calls and was recorded for ethical purposes.

Two different methods of data collection with three different participants groups were used. The usage of the interviews as a method of data collection allowed the researcher to use open-ended questions and probe where necessary during the interview (Brinkmann, 2015; Kvale, 2003). While the open-ended survey structured as a written interview allowed the learners to openly and freely respond to the questions asked. The survey was structured in an open manner and some questions required the learner participants to elaborate on their responses. The teachers assisting with the research process helped distribute the research kit to the interested five learners per grade in each school. Once they had completed the survey, they had to send picture screenshots of their survey responses, together with the consent/ assent forms to the researcher via WhatsApp or SMS. Those learners without data or airtime to send the screenshots had to send an SMS or please call me to the researcher. The researcher then called them, bought airtime for them worth R20 or just sent them airtime to send the screenshots. Only 22 learners completed open-ended surveys.

The challenges experienced with the data collection process for this participant group included some learners not following the given instructions of contacting the researcher upon completing the open-ended survey and sending picture screenshots of their responses. It must be acknowledged that due to failure to adhere to instructions given, the researcher frequently had to travel to the schools and some learners would deliver their surveys back to the teachers. This resulted in an overbudget of the financial spending throughout data collection.

With the HoD teachers and school social workers, semi-structured interviews were conducted telephonically with the HoDs and social workers and were approximately 45-60 minutes long. These semi-structured interviews were conducted at a time that was convenient for the individual participants. The interviews with both groups of participants were audio-recorded using a computer device. Despite the targeted sample for HoD teachers being six, three teachers per school, only three teachers from one school participated in this study. In addition, three school social workers participated in the research study.

Challenges experienced with data collection for the HoD teachers include accessibility and availability for the teachers. Data was collected during a busy time of the year as teachers had to prepare for the return of learners under COVID19 lockdown and as they had to prepare for learners' exams and assessments. This impacted their participation. Once the teachers'

numbers were received from the school principals, the researcher contacted them to introduce them to the research study and invite them to participate. All teachers were interested, and interviews dates and times were set. However, after numerous attempts to get some of them to participate in the telephonic interviews, only 3 teachers from one school participated.

Data collection with the school social workers took longer than expected as they too were quite busy with their work. With all three participants, interviews had to be rescheduled more than twice. Challenges experienced during data collection for both the HoD teachers and school social workers impacted financially for the researcher as more airtime had to be bought every time calls had to be made.

3.8 Methods of Data Analysis

The process of analysis "involves organizing the data, conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, coding and organizing themes, representing the data, and forming an interpretation of them" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 181). Given (2008) highlight that for the researcher and the reader, an essential component of research is the description of the collected data. Therefore, the researcher was able to reduce large amounts of information and data received from the three different participant groups to an easily understandable summary. The use of this analysis technique enabled the researcher to identify, determine, analyse and report themes or patterns within the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The collected data was divided based on responses from learners, HoDs and the school social workers. In addition, these themes and patterns were extracted from the data received and used to address the goals and objectives of the research about the research issue.

The researcher followed the 6 steps of thematic analysis mentioned by (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013)

Step 1: The researcher transcribed all interview data received from the HoD teachers and school social workers. Upon completion of this, the research went through all the transcriptions and the open-ended survey responses noting down some initial ideas from the data. This was done to become more familiar with the research data.

Step 2: During this stage, the researcher generated codes from the data received. This included highlighting phrases and sentences from the participants' responses that the

researcher found interesting, important, and relevant to the research study. From this, the researcher created codes or labels under which the highlighted data would be collated under.

Step 3: The researcher started analyzing the data at a broader level, beyond just collating the data into codes, but identifying patterns in the data and coming up with themes. At this stage, the different codes were collated into potential themes and data was gathered according to their relevance to a certain identified theme.

Step 4: At this stage, the themes were reviewed. This was so to ensure that the themes were a true representation of the data received from the transcriptions and open-ended surveys. The researcher relooked at the data and compared it to the emerging themes.

Step 5: At this stage, the researcher defined themes in which attention was made to the specifics of each theme and the ideas behind each theme, generating clear definitions and names of each of them.

Step 6: The last stage involved is writing up the analysis of the data which is this research report. The analysis (the write-up of it, including data extracts), which is the next chapter of this research report will provide a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tells – within and across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.9 Trustworthiness of the Study

The researcher applied the four constructs that are relevant to the trustworthiness of the study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Polit & Beck, 2008; Shenton, 2004)

Credibility refers to the truths of the findings and the quality of the research study to be conducted (Polit & Beck, 2008; Schneider, Whitehead, LoBiondo-Wood & Haber, 2015). The process of triangulation was applied in this research study in which the researcher involved different types of samples (learners, teachers, and school social workers) and different methods of data collection (surveys and interviews). Shenton (2004) reports on the credibility of the researcher as he/she is the major instrument of data collection. In this research, the researcher is a qualified social worker who has conducted individual and group interviews before. The researcher is equipped with the necessary interviewing skills and hold values that will ensure

that there was no bias in the research report findings. Before starting data collection, the research proposal was circulated to the academic scholar who interrogated and scrutinized it.

Dependability address's reliability and refers to ensuring that the findings of the research project are repeatable if the project was to be done again within the same cohort of participants, coders, and context. Schneider et al, (2015) explain that the dependability of the study is evaluated when it meets the associated criterion of auditability. In response to this, an audit trail was used. This included keeping a record of the research processes throughout the research study.

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be transferred or applied to other settings (Polit & Beck, 2008). The researcher provided sufficient information about the context of the study. It is hoped that this allows the readers and other researchers to have a better understanding of the study and utilise the findings in similar contexts.

Confirmability is set to be achieved if it meets the other three principles and when others agree on the findings and interpretation of the result of this study (Polit & Beck, 2008; Schneider et al, 2015). The researcher ensured that the research findings were the experiences and ideas of the research participants and not that of the researcher.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research requires that researchers "consider what ethical issues might surface during the study and plan how these issues need to be addressed" (p. 53). These issues arose at different times during the research study process, from the beginning to the end of the study.

3.10.1 Ethics clearance from the University

Before contact with the participants, the researcher applied for ethics at the University of Witwatersrand HREC (non-medical) committee and received ethical clearance to conduct the research project, with Protocol Number: H20/06/16. (See Appendix A).

3.10.2 Permission from relevant departments

Permission was requested and granted by the Gauteng Department of Education (DoE) which provided the researcher with a formal letter that was then taken to the two schools where the research project was conducted. In addition to the formal letters from DoE, permission was granted by the two schools which allowed the researcher to conduct the study with the learners and interview the HOD teachers. Permission was also granted by the Gauteng Department of Social Development which allowed the researcher to interview the three school social workers working in schools in the South of Johannesburg.

Some of the ethical issues that are applicable during the research project include the following:

3.10.3 Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation is described as the participant's exercise of their free will in deciding whether to participate in a research activity or not (Hogan, 2011). Therefore, participants were given a choice to participate, they were not coerced or influenced, and their choice was made after having been told about the research study and the risks or benefits of participating. Participants were given the right to withdraw from the study at any time, they were not persuaded or pressured to either be part of the study or remain participants of the study (Trochim, 2006). They were not required to explain their reasons for withdrawing their participation and there were no consequences for their decision to withdraw from the study. This was highlighted in the information sheets and consent and assent forms that will be signed by the parents, the learners, the teachers, and school social workers.

3.10.4 Obtaining informed consent

Trochim (2006) describes that before the study is conducted with the participants, they need to give full, voluntary, and conscious consent to be interviewed and a signed document or consent form needs to be signed to indicate that they do agree to participate or give verbal consent that is recorded, and records of all required documentations are kept. This was applied in the research study as the researcher disclosed all information related to the research study before the participants completed the consent and assent forms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). King (2010) explains that “such information should make it as clear as possible what is expected of the participants, what the purpose of the research is and what will be done with the data emerging from the study” (p. 100). This research study information was explained in a manner that was easy to understand and to avoid confusion in the PIS. Consent forms were given to learners

above the age of 18 years, the HoD teachers and school social workers. While assent forms were given to learners that are below the age of 18 years. These learners were required to receive consent from their parents/ guardians to participate in the research study. Informed consent was received from all participants of the study.

3.10.5 Distress protocol

Due to the nature of the research study, it was anticipated that some of the questions may elicit some unpleasant emotions and feelings from participants. Therefore, information and contact details of a social worker rendering support services to schools in the South of Johannesburg were added to the PIS. As well, the contact details for Lifeline Johannesburg and South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) who both offer telephonic counselling via WhatsApp calls and via their helpline telephone numbers were included.

3.10.6 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to access to the participants' personal information disclosed during the process of the study (King, 2010). Personal information includes the participants' names, grades and classroom numbers and date of birth. For the open-ended survey structured as a written interview, participates were not required to put do not their names and the class that they belong to, but rather, only the age and grade that they are doing. While for the interviews, none of the teachers and school social workers was asked to share their personal details.

3.10.7 Protecting anonymity

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the participant's personal information (i.e., names, grades) should be respected and kept private. Anonymity could not be guaranteed during the data collection process with the learners and the HoD teachers but was guaranteed with the social workers as only the researcher knew who participated in the study. For the write up on the research report, the learners are referred to as Learner Participant 1 (LP1) and so on, the teachers are referred to as Teacher Participant 1 (TP2) and so on, and the school social workers are referred to as Social Work Participant 1 (SWP1) and so on.

3.11 Summary of Chapter

This chapter outlined and discussed the research approach and design followed in this study. Furthermore, a detailed account of the population, sampling strategy and procedures was

provided. The data collection and data analysis process were also discussed. Lastly, the chapter provided a detailed discussion on the ethical parameters considered during the research process. The following chapter provides a presentation and discussion of the findings of the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Based on literature related to human development, it was highlighted that the transition that learners experience between early adolescence and late adolescence is complex and is associated with various psychosocial challenges such as a change in social roles and responsibilities, peer-to-peer relationships, health-related challenges, and challenges that may be related to family life. A lot has been written about these challenges and other challenges that adolescent learners experience in school, though, not a lot of attention has been directed towards understanding those subjective psychosocial experiences of learners in government schools which have been reported to struggle with many issues related to poor quality of education and lack of resources within individual schools. This study aimed to explore these psychosocial challenges experienced by adolescent learners in grades 10-12 from their perspectives, the perspectives of their schoolteachers and social workers deployed to render support services at public schools. This chapter provides a presentation and discussion of the findings of this research. An outline of the participants' demographics is provided of the 22 learners, three teachers and three 2 school social workers that participated in this study. Through the use of thematic data analysis, the results are then presented in themes that were extracted from the data and discussed using the two aims and the six objectives of this research. The discussion will also link the results of the research study to the literature.

4.2 Demographic Profiles of Study Participants

4.2.1 Demographic profile of the learner participants

The profile of the learner participants is presented in the below table.

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of Learner Participants (N=22)

Demographic Factor	**Sub-category**	**No**
Gender	Male	8
	Female	14
Age	15-16	5
	17-18	13
	19	3
	Unknown	1
Grade	10	4
	11	8

	12	10
School	1 2	12 10

All the participants were Black learners and completed the open-ended survey structured as a written interview in English, although they were informed that the questionnaire was also available in a language that they preferred with other language choices being isiZulu and Southern Sesotho.

4.2.2 Demographic profile of teacher participants

The research project initially targeted three HoDs per school to achieve a sample size of six HoDs. However, although potential teacher participants in School 1 were approached, and followed up on several occasions to arrange for the telephonic interviews, unfortunately, they were not cooperative and did not keep to the appointments that were scheduled with them. The three Grade 10 HoDs who participated in the study were from School 2. One was male and two were female. The interviews were conducted telephonically and were in English. Each interview was between 45 minutes to 60 minutes.

4.2.3 Demographic profile of social work participants

The three social workers who participated in the study were working for the Department of Social Development and were deployed to render services in Johannesburg South schools. One was a male and two were female. The male social worker had more than 5 years of working experience in the field of school social work while the other two were new, with over one year of experience working in the field of school social work. All three social workers were interviewed telephonically, and the interviews were conducted in English.

Based on the data received from the three participant groups (i.e., learners, HoD teachers and school social workers), data were analysed using thematic analysis whereby themes and sub-themes were deduced from the participants' responses and were classified into appropriate categories. The questions used in the open-ended survey structured as a written interview and the questions that guided the telephonic interviews with the teachers and social workers became the initial themes for the data generated.

4.3 Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the collected data

The below table presents the seven themes with associated sub-themes that emerged from the data collected from all three groups of participants in the qualitative study.

Table 4.2 Themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
4.3.1 Psychosocial Challenges	4.3.1.1 Challenges at home i. Overcrowding ii. Household chores iii. Lack of resources to support learning iv. Emotional Challenges 4.3.1.2 Challenges at school i. Academic related challenges ii. Studying and time management skills iii. Lack of resources to support learning iv. Crime and violence v. Substance abuse vi. Gambling vii. Teenage pregnancy viii. Distance to school
4.3.2 Factors contributing to psychosocial challenges	4.3.2.1 Factors at home i. Poverty ii. Lack of support from parents 4.3.2.2 Factors at School i. School governance ii. School crime and violence iii. Time management iv. Teachers' attitude
4.3.3 Influence of challenges on learners' well-being	4.3.3.1 Academic 4.3.3.2 Social relationships 4.3.3.3 Psychological influences 4.3.3.4 Resilience
4.3.4 Early warning signs to challenges experienced by learners	4.3.4.1 Behavioural changes 4.3.4.2. Social withdrawal 4.3.4.3 Academic underperformance
4.3.5 Available support services	4.3.5.1 Support at the school

	4.3.5.2 Role of school social workers 4.3.5.3 Support from Friends 4.3.5.4 Support from External Organisations
4.3.6 Barriers faced by social workers in service delivery in schools	4.3.6.1 Confusion about the role of social workers in school 4.3.6.2 Lack of resources from Department of Social Development 4.3.6.3 Allocation of space in schools 4.3.6.4 Parents' involvement
4.3.7 Improving the psychosocial services in schools	4.3.7.1 Voices of learners 4.3.7.2 Approaches by the teachers 4.3.7.3 Approach the social workers

In the following section, the findings of the study will be discussed in relation to the themes and sub-themes that were derived from thematic analysis in order to give an overview and obtain insight into the psychosocial challenges experienced by the learners. This section will further spell out how the challenges faced by learners were perceived by teachers and social workers after being classified into relevant themes.

4.3.1 Psychosocial Challenges

The theme of psychosocial challenges was sub-divided into home-based and school-rooted challenges. It will be discussed accordingly and the different aspects in the two sub-themes will be highlighted.

4.3.1.1 Challenges at home

Many participants described the challenges that they experience at home as being related to family hardships which is a characteristic of poverty as described byDashiff, DiMicco, Myers and Sheppard (2009). Exposure to poverty either through family hardships or coming from disadvantaged communities may mean that learners are less advantaged and are susceptible to social exclusion, vulnerability, lack of satisfaction of basic needs, relative deprivation, marginalisation and low incomes to sustain their livelihoods. These characteristics of poverty emerged from many of the learner participants' responses.

i. Overcrowding

Many participants described their homes were not having enough space to allow them to focus on their schoolwork. This appeared to prevent them from attending to their schoolwork when they were home (i.e., homework):

> *"Don't get enough study time because we are overcrowded and there is small space. At home we don't have enough money to support ourselves. A poor living lifestyle."* (Learner Participant 4, School 1)

> *"Not being able to study because at home we are a family of five, but my older sister's children come and sleepover and they make noise. I can't concentrate when I get to the bedroom. I study for an hour or so, then my mom wants to sleep, I have to go out and join them in the dining room. I am also not studying because they are watching TV till late, I end up going to sleep without studying*." (Learner Participant 6, School 1)

Household overcrowding experienced at a young age seems to be one of the many characteristics of poverty (Pepin et al, 2018). Solari and Mare (2012) noted that poor living conditions such as overcrowding can be a driving force to social stratification and have a significant impact on learners' wellbeing and academic performances. The responses shared by learner participants indicate that overcrowding affects how they engage with their schoolwork when they get home and their academic performance. Learners who professed to be vulnerable to this type of living arrangement also attested to being forced to use the limited space to do their schoolwork amid inevitable distractions and/or disturbances at the hands of the other household members.

ii. Household chores

Many learner participants seem to fulfil home chores or duties allocated to them when they get home after school. These were described to be challenging and problematic as the time to attend to their academic work is affected:

> *"Some challenges are me having to come back from school and cook, clean and wash my school uniform."* (Learner Participant 1, School 1)

> *"Having to multitask by looking after my baby sister, do house chores and school-work…"* (Learner Participant 17, School 2)

"Writing my prelims and still having to do my house chores like a child." (Learner Participant 9, School 1)

Based on the above extracts, learners seem to struggle with completing their household chores or tasks and attending to academic-related work. Chinyoka and Naidu's (2014) research findings support this notion that learners' academic work is impacted when they prioritise household chores. Their study findings indicated that learners, especially girl children were losing out on education because they were expected to do their household chores after school, e.g., cooking, washing dishes, cleaning etc.

iii. Lack of resources to support learning

Lack of learning resources such as computer devices like laptops (or computer laboratories at their schools) was diversely noted as another barrier to learners' successful completion of academic-related work. Learners reported the following as their challenges:

"*My parents are not earning an enough income to buy me stuff like a laptop for my studies, but I have accepted my situation and I am really grateful for their support.* (Participant 12, School1)

"Not having easy access to purchasing data bundles, electronic devices are limited and when needed, they are really unavailable" (Participant 16, School 2)

Families living in financial hardships tend to find it very difficult to meet their children's academic needs such as providing them with the relevant resources needed by their children to effectively complete their academic-related work. The above responses from learners indicate that their families may not be able to provide them with electronic devices and if they do, the devices are used by other household members, thus limiting their time to access these devices. This might be a barrier to learning because COVID19 has shifted how learners are expected to complete their academic work from the traditional ways i.e., going to school every day, receiving classes and making use of books to complete work to hybrid ways of learning i.e., going to school on some days, making use of online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp for learning and passing academic work to learners.

Learners went on to describe their family hardships by expressing challenges that were linked to their households' incomes. While some acknowledged that their parents or someone at their home had some form of an income, most of them described their families' income as being low, and not being able to fully meet their household needs and their personal needs:

> *"I experience financial problems; not being able to do or get what other kids get."* (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

> *"Going from day to day without eating or having little to take in, making it hard to sometimes study."* (Learner Participant 9, School 1)

> *"My mom is working for an NGO, so she does not earn a good income and she is always in debts of loan sharks. My father is unemployed but at the moment he is good at installing ceiling for people in our neighbourhood so sometimes you may find there is no job opportunity for him, and it means he has no income, but he makes sure we go to bed full."* (Learner Participant 12, School 1).

The majority of South African households and communities live in adverse poverty (Leibbrandt et al, 2010; Statistics South Africa, 2021) as most families are unable to fully provide for their basic needs. This is supported by findings from previous scholars who reported that 65 % of the South African children live below the poverty line and that their family incomes were below R1138 per month (Hall, Richter, & Lake, 2018). Considering the above extracts, not getting the basic needs owing to the family's financial hardships showed that most children find themselves being negatively impacted by their owing to their families' financial distress.

iv. Emotional challenges

Many learners expressed that they were experiencing some form of psychological problems while at home. These included feelings of loneliness, stress, depression, and low self-esteem. Learners in grades 10-12 are within the adolescence stage and are usually at a high risk of experiencing self-esteem impairment and developing depression which, Fiorilli, Capitello, Barni, Buonomo and Gentile (2019) suggested that may be stimulated by their interpersonal relationships, changes in life events and their failure to manage negative emotions. The following responses from learners support the notion of emotional and psychological challenges experienced by young people while at home:

"I spend most of the time stressing about my education that has been taken for granted." (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

The same participant elaborated on possible triggers of this stressful experience:

"As I experience financial problems, not being able to do or get what other kids get. It's really hard being myself because I find myself being forced to grow up fast and understand my background. Some challenges are me having to come back from school and cook, clean and wash my school uniform which is really depressing because it makes me feel lonely on the journey I'm going and the future I'm trying to build for me and them" (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

On the other hand, the other participants commented as follows:

"I experience loneliness as I am the youngest child. All my bothers are now old, and they don't live here anymore, and my parents are old." (Learner Participant 20, School 2)

"Family relationships. Disappointments in friendships. Low self-esteem. Confusion of career. Noisy neighbours. There is no electricity. Not knowing my existence; who I am, what I want." (Learner Participant 5, School1)

"Being home most of the time and not having anyone to talk to." (Learner Participant 13, School 2)

The above extracts from the participants show that learners are emotionally affected by their home experiences (i.e., having to cope with household chores or tasks, academic-related work, family hardships such as financial problems, and not having siblings around, having families that struggle to academically support learners). The effect of this seems similar across the different responses. Learners are experiencing feelings of loneliness and they are feeling unsupported. Pathak et al (2011)'s research findings were similar to what has been shared by the above participants as they concluded that many adolescents suffer from emotional and behavioural problems which have their roots in the family environment. Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory describes that at the microsystem level, the child's development is affected by their interaction with their immediate environment which in this case is their family

environment. Their experiences at home seem to fuel their emotional challenges (Paquette & Ryan, 2015). Ruiz et al (2012) found that emotional adjustment issues such as low self-esteem and feelings of loneliness have a great impact on how the learners' feel about their lives. In most cases, those who experience these emotional challenges expressed by the above challenges tend to be more dissatisfied with their lives.

4.3.1.2 Psychosocial Challenges Faced at School

It is also pivotal to understand the challenges that learners experience while at school. These challenges may stem from the above-mentioned challenges that learners experience while at home, and some may originate from the school environment and all that they get exposed to while at school.

i. Academic related challenges

The participants highlighted that some of the difficulties that they experienced while at school included their failure to understand the content being taught, particularly in Mathematics. As a result of this challenge, they became more prone to failing this subject. McCarthy and Oliphant (2013) noted that South African learners underperform mainly in Mathematics, with their performance recorded as being the lowest in the 21 middle-income countries that participated in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The below responses from learners allude to this academic challenge:

> *"Not doing well in my studies, specifically maths."* (Learner Participant 13, School 2)

> *"Mathematics lit. I am not good as I'm struggling with this subject but am asking my teacher and he's doing his best to teach me and I'm recovering."* (Learner Participant 14, School 2)

This challenge is not sorely inclined to learners but may also stem from the bigger and critical struggles faced by South African schools, i.e., many teachers' "lack of mathematical content knowledge, and the skills" necessary to teach the subject (Norton, 2012). This was revealed in a study that investigated the content knowledge of South African mathematics teachers, which held that these individuals possess a limited understanding of the curriculum and its content (Norton, 2012).

ii. Studying and time management skills

Another learner stated that she struggles with effective studying and managing her time. The learners must use time correctly and effectively especially for overall growth and development for adolescents (Wennberg, 2019). Akcoltekin (2015) stated that the period of adolescence requires learners to achieve complicated tasks (which include planning for the future and academic success) within an allotted time frame. Therefore, "it is important for adolescents to be successful in comprehending the importance of time, realizing habits related to the usage of time, and changing incorrect behaviours if they have developed them because, in an environment where the consciousness of time cannot be achieved, an individual's control over life also disappears, and development depends on coincidence and luck" (Akcoltekin, 2015, p. 2242):

> *"Sometimes I forget the details of things that we have already learned due to learning different subjects. Each and every subject need to be taken seriously and I need to avoid cram sessions and structuring my study time accordingly."* (Learner Participant 10, School 1)

The above extract from one of the participants indicates that failure to manage time appropriately may result in learners taking short-cuts at learning e.g., cramming the academic content. In essence, through the use of time management (e.g., setting and prioritizing goals, planning, organization) (Burrus, Jackson, Holtzman & Roberts, 2017), the learner would be in a good position to carry out his/her academic goals, targets and activities. According to Alay and Koçak (2002), fully understanding and applying time management may not solve some of the issues that individuals face but the application of the skill does assist in reaching effective solutions and outcomes.

iii. Lack of resources to support learning

Joseph and Carpenter expressed that "the right to education is meaningless without teachers to teach, administrators to keep schools running, desks and other furniture to allow scholars to do their work, textbooks from which to learn, and transport to and from school at State expense in appropriate cases" (2017, p. 289). The achievement of education by learners is negatively impacted if a school lacks the necessary resources to support learning processes. The below responses from learner participants indicates that the two schools are still struggling with having enough learning resources, in a way that affects the learners' academic performance:

"Not having enough resources to do my schoolwork and going to write the exams while in other subjects the syllabus is not covered." (Learner Participant 6, School 1)

"Inadequate learning materials such as textbooks. Not having access to the school Wi-Fi. Inadequate infrastructure." (Learner Participant 8, School 1)

"The need for data when I need not do my school projects and assignments. The need for textbooks such as study guide and exam practice because the textbook really helps so that I can be on the right track when I need to ace my exams." (Learner Participant 12, School 2)

The challenges highlighted by the learner participants were the same as those noted by Murtin (2013), namely that there exist inequalities and lack of educational resources across South African schools because several schools remain disadvantaged and they struggle with infrastructure backlogs, low or no availability of learning resources such as textbooks, desks and technological learning devices among others.

iv. Crime and violence

Many participants raised concerns related to violence, safety, and security. The learners who participated in this did not feel safe at school because of the location of the school and the violence that occurs within and in the surrounding areas of the schools. It was reported that the violence was caused by both learners and those from outside communities:

"Not being safe in the school premises, learners do not know how to respect the school premise as they bring dangerous objects and it has become a norm." (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

"I don't feel safe at school because of the area that side is so overpopulated and full of thieves especially these young boys that stands by the corner. Anytime they feel like entering the school and start robbing us, they enter. The security is not tight." (Learner Participant 6, School 1)

Schools are meant to be safe environments where learners come together to learn and equip themselves with knowledge, but this seems to be threatened by exposure to crime at a

community level and a school level from other fellow schoolmates. Based on the above extracts, it would be safe to presume that exposure to crime at a community level has impacted the learners' behaviours as the ecological theory shares insight that the child does not function independently from her environment and that the mesosystem influences the child's development, in this case, exposure to crime results into the learners adopting such similar behaviours as noted by Participant 2, School 1.

Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) explained that violence and crime in schools affect both the learners and school staff members alike. A specific form of violence, i.e., bullying often occurs within the school vicinity and was reported by other learner participants, the social workers and the teachers as a prevalent problem. As previously noted, bullying happens when there is conflict or harassment, and it is a behaviour that is continuous and is done with an intent to cause harm to the next person:

> *"We still have bullying at school; finding some other learners bullying each other for the sake of money or lunch boxes."* (Learner Participant 11, School 1)

> *"Being regarded as a person who is holy as compared to other teenagers and their behaviours. I am regarded I'm uptight, that I don't like life and enjoy it to the fullest. Being pushed around/ made a laughingstock because of the way I think/ use my mind."* (Learner Participant 16, School 2)

With the focus on grade 9 learners, the 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) found that 17 % of learners experienced bullying every week (Reddy, Visser, Winnaar, Arends, Juan, Prinsloo & Isdale, 2016). Most of these bullying cases were found to be learner-to-learner based. At the same time, there is also a need to acknowledge the bullying that learners experience from teachers. The below response from a learner participant reports on the bullying that she experienced from a teacher:

> *"I was bullied by two teachers through the comments that they said. I have been struggling to study because of this. I have a low self-esteem and I was pushed down by being told that I am not capable."* (Learner Participant 18, School 2)

The experiences of the learner in the above extracts reflect on the bullying that is perpetuated by the teacher to the learner(s). This is often demonstrated through emotional, intellectual and

physical bullying. While not much research has been conducted on this subtheme, Burriss and Snead (2018) stated that teacher to learner bullying has a profound negative influence on the learner's self-concept and their interaction with others within the school premises and in the outside community. Teacher bullying can be observed through public embarrassment, and/or belittling or humiliating the learner. Bullying has a severe impact on the functioning of the learner who experiences it. The effects of bullying reported by Learner Participant 18 is supported by literature as it has alluded that the victimized learner "may experience confusion, anger, fear, and begin to doubt their social and academic competencies" (Burriss & Snead, 2018). When the learners fail to respond to the negative experiences of bullying directed to them and build their resilience to deal with this, they are met with adverse consequences on their psychosocial functioning such as an impact on their self-esteem (Naveed et al,2019).

v. Substance abuse

The use of substances such as drugs and alcohol was reported to be one of the challenges that learners are faced with within the two selected schools. The impact of the use of substances includes unruly behaviours from learners and failure to adhere to school rules that prohibit learners from bringing intoxicating substances and drugs into the school premises:

> *"The challenges that I'm experiencing at school is that we see drugs dealers every day and those drug dealers provide school learners with illegal drugs. The learners end up doing funny things during school hours were by they laugh non-stop and end up not getting an education."* (Participant Learner 11, School 1)

The teacher participants also alluded to the issues of substance use at the school when they said:

> *"Majority of them get involved in drugs like marijuana and also smoking cigarettes and some of them go to an extent of bringing alcohol into the school; they hide them in their bags and the toilets."* (Teacher Participant 1)

> *"We know that currently, dagga is rife. We had nyaope at one stage, but we haven't seen it at the moment. We also know that some of them take the cocaine but to be honest with you, no one has been caught with that it, we just hear it by the great vines but mostly it's dagga, cigarettes and alcohol."* (Teacher Participant 3)

> *"The most challenges that we came across was substance abuse…"* (Social Work Participant 1)

Studies on the use of substances amongst adolescents have consistently indicated that there is a high rate of substance use amongst male learners as compared to female learners (Moodley, Matjila & Moosa, 2012). In contrary, one of the teacher participants reported that this seems to have changed over time:

> *"The trend over the years is now changing in a sense that there are more females than males doing the alcohol and the drugs."* (Teacher Participant 1)

The above extracts from the participants responses indicate that the use of drugs is a critical challenge in schools. This is supported by Pretorius (2020) who stated that the abuse of substances (both soft and hard drugs) is common in developed and developing countries with some of the drugs used in South Africa being 'tik' (methamphetamine) and nyaope or whoonga/wunga (a highly addictive mixture of marijuana, heroin, and HIV medication). Moodley, Matjila and Moosa (2012)'s findings indicated that the most common substances that adolescents use include alcohol, cannabis, and cigarettes. These are known to be cheap drugs and the consequence of their usage includes addiction and involvement in criminal activities.

vi. Gambling

Brolin Låftman et al (2020) explained that gambling is not uncommon amongst adolescents, but it has become an apparent issue in schools. One of the teachers alluded to this issue and compared it to drug use in the school premises:

> *"For them, gambling is all about money. When they look at other learners with money, they also want to have it. The only way for them to get whatever that they want is for them to gamble. The other thing is that I have noticed is that other learners don't have spending money. So when they have R2 and when they see that another learner has R10. They decide to gamble so that I can also get that R10 for them to be able to buy kota or chips."* (Teacher Participant 2)

The teacher further went on to explain that gambling is linked to drugs:

"With drugs and gambling, they are always out of the class. When you even ask other learners where a specific learner is, they would tell you that he is gambling by the tuckshops. Then you also ask others, they would tell you they are by the stairs. You know that they are there because they are gambling or they are smoking" (Teacher Participant 2)

A study conducted by Weinberger et al (2015), titled *'Gambling behaviors and attitudes in adolescent high-school students: Relationships with problem-gambling severity and smoking status'* found three factors that influence school-going adolescents relationship with gambling and smoking. First, adopting gambling as a coping strategy to deal with anxiety. Second, gambling for financial (monetary) gain. Third, gambling as a mechanism of passing time. This supports the notion that respondents experience gambling for financial reasons, i.e., so that they can be able to buy lunch meals at school.

vii. Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy was reported as one of the social challenges that learners faced within the school setting. The below extracts from the different participant groups highlight an issue that has been mostly spoken about in literature. Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) noted that the issue of teenage pregnancy is not a new phenomenon and that is it a social and educational concern for all countries around the globe:

"Teenage pregnancy; young learners have babies; some are pregnant because of their behaviour of chasing after the things that are far away from them." (Learner Participant 11, School 1)

"With teenage pregnancy, you know that these children are being taught of safe sex, abstinence and all that but still they get pregnant. Others have two children already in grade 11. You ask yourself what is the problem, in my view I think that it is all about the grant money." (Teacher Participant 2)

"We do find a lot of causes related to mostly sexual assault or just promiscuous sexual behaviours amongst the learners that lead to teenage pregnancies." (Social Work Participant 2)

> *"It [teenage pregnancy] affects them as a year is wasted. Remember that if she falls pregnant now, she has to leave school. It affects them as the learner would now be behind with her school work, she also starts being absent daily. On some days she has to take care of the child, or the child did not wake up fine. Her mother can't because she is out working for both of them [the learner and her child]. She now has to take the role of being a parent; now she is a parent, and she is also a learner. She has to fulfil both these roles and with some learners, their grade drop."* (Teacher Participant 2)

This supports extant literature finding that were reviewed in this study, for example, the statics released by World Health Organisation (2014) established that teenage pregnancy is a social issue with about 16 million girls between the ages of 15 and 19 and about one million girls below the age of 15 giving birth annually. Yearly, pregnancy numbers within the South African context, specifically in the Gauteng region were found to be significantly higher than other provinces (i.e., than 5000) (Department of Basic Education, 2014 as cited in Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). The teacher participant alluded to the impact of teenage pregnancy as a negative contributor to academic performance, absenteeism and school dropout of pregnant learners. A study conducted by Nkosi and Pretorius (2019) found that the learners' school attendance gets affected when they fall pregnant as the learners would need to focus on babysitting arrangements and the health of the child. Additionally, oftentimes, there is no one left at home to look after their child, therefore forcing them to stay home or juggle between responding to the child's needs and being at school.

viii. Distance to school

Some learners expressed that the distance to school was a challenge for them, mainly because their homes were far from the school and there was no school transport to use to go to the school:

> *"I really walk a long distance to get to school. I don't always have money for taxi-fare so it's really bugging me. I can't carry all my books because of this because they're heavy."* (Learner Participant 1, School 1)

> *"Late coming because I live far from the school."* (Learner Participant 4, School 1)

Walking long distances to school as a challenge is supported by Joseph and Carpenter (2017) who explained that "every day, millions of learners hoping to better themselves through education wake up early to get to school. But for learners who have long distances to travel, the journey can be much more difficult". The distance to school seems to impact the learners' arrival time at the school as one of the learners reported that they end up arriving late, while the other learner alluded to the fact that they have to carry all their heavy school material with them on the daily basis. Joseph and Carpenter (2017, p. 279) stated that not having transport to school has adverse consequences to the learner's access to education which could lead to the learners not finishing school.

4.3.2 Factors contributing to the psychosocial challenges

The challenges that learners, teachers, and social workers alluded to in the previous theme and sub-themes all have root causes. These vary based on the challenges experienced. The different factors that contribute to the psychosocial challenges as perceived by the learners are divided in terms of factors contributing to challenges at home and school. It will be discussed accordingly and the different factors in the two main sub-themes will be emphasised.

4.3.2.1 Factors at home

i. Lack of resources to support learning

Coming from a household that is poor or survives on the bare minimum wage of one person is a major contributor to most of the challenges that learners face at home. The household income is usually too low to meet the needs of the individual learners and the needs of other members of the household:

> *"My dad is our breadwinner, he's the only person who's employed and my parents aren't financially stable. They can only provide us with things we need like food and clothes."* (Learner Participant 1, School 1)

> *"Poverty and inequality make us experience such challenges because if the was no poverty, people will be able to satisfy their needs than taking them to us with the force."* (Learner Participant 11, School 1)

> *"My mom is a breadwinner so very little cent she gets, it must be spent on food and clothes. So the little she earns is not enough to feed a family of five."* (Participant 12, School 2).

A teacher and social work also expressed that poverty is a challenge for many families which negatively affects the learners' academic performance:

> *"I think all these are linked together because if at home you are poor, you do not have money for spending, you do not have money to do your hair, so you resort to these things, you'd rather get pregnant or gamble so that you can get money of income. So I think that poverty is an umbrella cause."* (Teacher Participant 2)

> *"The most challenges that we came across was… child-headed households, a poverty-stricken family where you find that no one is employed, and they rely on the grant."* (Social Work Participant 3)

According to Statistics South Africa (2020) six out of ten children, or 62.1 % are living in poor conditions, meaning that more of the South African children population is currently living in poverty. These responses stem from the home challenges such as overcrowding and lack of resources to support learning and participants noted that they result from poverty and low household income. These participant experiences affirm what has been found in the literature on the importance of positive home circumstances in the upbringing of a learner (Hall, Richter & Lake, 2018; Solari & Mare,2012; Leibbrandt et al, 2010).

ii. Lack of support from parents

Many learner participants felt that they were not receiving enough support from their families. Because there are expectations of the parents to take responsibility for household chores, they fail to complete schoolwork owing to limited time and this is a challenge for them.

> *"I think I'm experiencing them because my parents aren't educated and they believe that I'm supposed to do as they say whether I'm coming back from school tired or not, chores are chores. I feel like they don't consider my feelings, they got this belief that they are building me to be a strong person."* (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

The learner further elaborated by explaining:

> *"I also think it's because my parents are still doing things stricter way and not in a modern way where you get to sit down and talk about how things are going to work or benefit us a family with an understanding of parent and daughter."* (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

> *"Family relationships – because sometimes I feel lonely and always having arguments."* (Learner Participant 5, School 1)

> *"It's because I don't get enough support or motivation from my family, I end up not doing anything, but I keep quiet and still laugh along and smile."* (Learner Participant 6, School 1)

The above extracts portray the complex relationship dynamics between learners and their parents. There are various forms of support that seem to be missing at home that learners need, and they include lack of assistance with attending to household chores and duties, lack of emotional support, motivation and encouragement. With specific reference to girl children, Chinyoka and Naidu (2013) stated that what happens within the learners' households can influence how they respond in situations and a lack of support from families usually impacts negatively on their cognitive development. This speaks to the ecological theory's understanding that there is an interactive relationship between the learner and their family that affect their development, in this case, their cognition. Parental support and parental involvement in the learners' education are seen as a crucial component as such support carries along with it some social and emotional benefits (Chinyoka and Naidu, 2013; Munje & Mncube, 2018; Sapungan & Sapungan, 2014). While reasons for the lack of support for learners by parents may be subjective, literature highlights that support in terms of positive motivation and encouragement from parents impact the child's morale, attitudes, and academic achievement across all subject areas, thus promoting better child behaviour and social adjustment (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2013).

4.3.2.2 Factors at school

i. School governance

The learner participants expressed that they experienced many of their challenges because of how the school is managed, drawing attention to the lack of support that they received at school and the crime and violence that occur on the school premises. The below extract suggest that the learners believe that the school is responsible for the challenges that they are faced with:

> *"I think I'm experiencing these challenges at school because of poor school governance. There is a lack of support from the school."* (Learner Participant 7, School 1)

Another learner participant felt that school staff, the principal and teachers were not fulfilling their duties:

> *"It's because the principal is ignorant about what's happening and because teachers aren't doing their part of the job as hired, they have become too relaxed in that school…"* (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

Another learner participant thought that her psychosocial challenges at school were a result of the government not providing financial support to public schools which would help with sustaining the school:

> *"I think the government isn't providing enough funds to public school to survive or be well taken care of. "*(Learner Participant 6, School 1)

The extracted responses from learner participants indicate that the schools seem to be failing to fully support the learners' education as the participants reported that there was poor governance and a lack of support for learners at the school and a lack of support to schools by the government. This could mean that the schools are not able to fully provide for the learners due to the government educational department providing limited funds to support schools. This has an impact on learners as Jones (2011) argues that inadequate support and the absence or shortage of learning resources directly contributes to the challenge that learners' experience.

ii. School crime and violence

The schools were reported as failing to ensure that crime does not take place within the school premises. Contrary to the literature on crime and violence in South African schools which highlights crime and violence in schools to be related to assaulted, robbed, and sexual violence

while in the school premises (Burton, 2008; Netshitangani, 2014), the below extracts indicate that crime and violence in the schools include learners stealing resources, vandalizing property, disrespectful attitudes expressed to teachers by learners, and bullying:

> *"Some other learners tend to steal textbooks, and this leads to other learners having inadequate learning material. Some other learners vandalize the school property or infrastructure. Not having wi-fi access, the school does not allow all learners to use wi-fi, but science learners use it."* (Learner Participant 8, School 1)

> *"Learners are corrupt, they disrespect teachers and promise to hit them which makes things hard for teachers to work."* (Learner Participant 8, School 1)

> *"I find it so offending when learners at my age disrespect teachers or other learners and that also make me furious then I lose self-discipline and become a good learner."* (Learner Participant 8, School 1)

Another learner who had indicated that she has been bullied by class peers expressed that she experiences the challenge because of her good grades:

> *"I experience them (being bullied) because a lot of teachers are fond of me. So, they think the teachers favour me and I don't work hard for my marks."* (Learner Participant 15, School 2)

Learner Participant 15's experiences describe signs of jealousy from other learners due to the belief that teachers favour her. This is sometimes the reason some learners get bullied as Waters (2017, p. 3) explained that "teacher favouritism along with academic and social success and shortcomings play a significant role in the totality of bullying."

iii. Time management

Time management is a very important skill that many need to learn and implement in their lives. It is essential for adolescents to comprehend the importance of time, how they use time and how they lose time (Akcoltekin, 2015). When time management is understood and mastered, learners learn to prioritise and plan accordingly to attend to and execute certain given tasks.

> *"Being unable to manage time."* (Learner Participant 5, School 1)

"I don't take enough time to study my schoolwork." (Learner Participant 13, School 2)

The above extracts suggest that the learner participants are struggling to manage time and it is due to this that they experience some academic challenges related to understanding the content of the work they are given. Akcoltekin (2015) argued that there is a significant relationship between the ability to time manage and academic achievement amongst learners. In this regard, failure to manage time results in academic failure or low performance among learners.

iv. Teachers' attitudes

The South African public schooling system is faced is numerous challenges that directly and indirectly impact the psychosocial functioning of learners. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) explain that some of those public schooling system challenges include poor performing teachers with poor work ethics. The below extracts highlight learner participants' responses on how the teachers are contributing to their psychosocial challenges:

> *"Teachers do not approach the best effective way on teaching, they tend to teach by the book only than going deeper for us to understand it better." (*Learner Participant 16, School 2)

> *"Because teachers aren't doing their part of the job as hired, they have become too relaxed in that school."* (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

> *"… and our teachers normally need to focus on different grades that's why at school we can attend school extra class. I sometimes fail to understand other teachers' knowledge because we learn in multiple ways."* (Learner Participant 10, School 1)

The learner participants' responses indicate that they experience some academic-related challenges because they fail to understand the methods of teaching used by teachers and they suggest that teachers are not fully fulfilling the duties. One of the participants reported on the age and enthusiasm of the teachers as they shared that the current teachers at the school needed to be replaced with *'newer, fresher and motivated teachers'*:

> *"Age; most of the teachers are already old at school and have taught for many years but their presence at school is hindering the arrival of new, fresher and motivated teachers*" (Learner Participant 9, School 1)

The above extract is confirmed by Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013) who acknowledge that South African teachers may be underperforming and that their morale and enthusiasm may be low. Literature has also found that teachers' morale is low and that they are not fully satisfied with their jobs because of the job demand, lack of growth in their jobs and work, and learners' academic performance (Iwu, Gwija, Benedict & Tengeh, 2013; Mji & Makgato, 2006). Therefore, this affects the quality of teaching and how teachers may engage with learners (Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2013).

4.3.3 Influences of challenges on the learners' well-being

These above-mentioned challenges experienced by learners in their home and school environments affect how they function at the multidimensional systems and different ecological levels; biosystem, the biological traits that influence their cognitive, emotional and physical functioning; microsystem, interactions with their families and peers; mesosystem, interactions with the education institutions; ecosystems, social processes involved in mitigating the micro and mesosystems; macrosystem, the community at large; and chronosystems, the period in which these challenges are being experienced (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Ungar, 2011). The theory of resilience argues that these ecologies are pivotal for the upbring and growth of the learner as they can either threaten their development or be the source of the different capital needed by the learners to respond to psychosocial stressors and adversities. These challenges have been reported to affect them academically, socially, and emotionally.

4.3.3.1 Academics

Academic performance matters for all learners in school, however, due to challenges that the learners are faced with, their performance is often affected. One of the learners commented on how the psychosocial challenges influence the schoolwork:

> *"Academically, because I've dropped from one of the best learners to one of the dumpiest learners who has lost a sense of direction of their future."* (Participant Learner 2, School 1)

> *"[my challenges affect me as] I sometimes lose hope that I'll ever do well in maths."* (Learner Participant 13, School 2)

The above response from learner participant 2 shows an intertwined relationship between the learner's psychosocial experiences and their academic performance. Both these aspects affect their well-being. The resilience theory postulates that education contributes to how the learner copes with the life adversities that they face, whether at home or school, and education may act as a compensating mechanism that provides the learner with a sense of own competence (Novotný & Kremenkova, 2016). Failure to respond positively to life adversities may indicate that individuals lack the capacity to be resilient, therefore, impacting their academics as seen in both above responses from the learner participants. By sustaining resilience in school, the learners might perform well academically.

One of the social worker participants support the above response as they acknowledged that academically the learners who experience these challenges are struggling to cope:

> *"Educationally the learners are not coping, their work always decreases. You find a learner which was an A learner, that was getting 90s, their work keeps dropping and when you check they are already in their 50s because you can't be affected by these issues and still manage to cope."* (Social Work Participant 1).

Other learners echoed similar responses from the above participants but focused their responses on the effects of crime and violence at school:

> *"They affect me academically as I can't concentrate in school because I'm always in fear thinking that what if they enter the school premises and start harassing us."* (Learner Participant 6, School 1)

> *"They are affecting my wellbeing because now I'm not able to focus fully on my schoolwork because of cruel learners that disturb us each and every minute when we are trying to study.* (Learner Participant 11, School 1)

Learner 11 went on to share that these challenges related to concerns about her safety and security have led her to feel demotivated to continue going to school:

> *"It also affects my wellbeing because sometimes I'm feeling lazy to go to school thinking of what my going to face each and every day…"* (Participant Learner 11, School 1)

Another participant shared the following:

> *"I think these challenges at school are affecting my wellbeing because sometimes I feel like school is not the place of teaching and learning, ending up feeling like not going to school anymore."* (Participant Learner 7, School 1)

The above responses indicate that while learners may experience similar challenges, the depth of the impact of these challenges differs from a learner to a learner. Most of them underperform in their academics, and some become demotivated to continuously go to school. Nconsta and Shumba (2020) support that schools have become places where it is difficult for teachers to teach and learners to learn as they are in constant fear of their safety. It was also found that violence in schools affected school attendance and often led to dropping out, academic performances of learners, learners' lack of concentration, unpleasant learning and social atmosphere in classrooms and poor results (Nconsta & Shumba, 2020).

Another learner participant spoke about the impact of the lack of resources at school:

> *"Not having enough learning material really affects us, because the teacher might be explaining something that you don't see or be able to refer to. Not having infrastructure really affects us, because sometimes we don't chairs where you supposed to sit on top of and be comfortable while learning. Not having access to school wi-fi affects us because sometimes wi-fi is needed for research and gathering information, but we don't have it."* (Participant Learner 8, School 1)

The above extract highlights that the lack of learning resources such as textbooks, infrastructure; tables and chairs and wi-fi connection is a contributor to ineffective learning. Mupa and Chinooneka (2015) argue that resources in schools are important and are crucial to the learning process. For instance, textbooks are essential to improve the teaching and learning process, poor infrastructure will impact the process as it hinders successful learning, if there are no chairs and table, learners must stand through a lesson which affects them physically and notes-taking (Mupa & Chinnoneka, 2015).

The participant teachers and social workers seem to agree that these challenges that learners face at their homes and within the school premises affect their academic performance and leads to higher failure rates and drop-outs within grades 10-12. The drop in academic performance is explained by the knowledge gap that the learners have, not submitting schoolwork and the responsibilities that come with being a teenage parent:

> *"Failure rate is too high and there is a knowledge gap. You'd give them an assignment or task to do, and they don't know how to answer."* (Teacher Participant 1)

> *".... they are affected in a very negative way; their grades go down and end up not performing so well in school. Most of them also miss a lot of days in school."* (Social Work Participant 2)

> *"... affects their academic performance, it decreases their chances to developing academically and pursuing careers which need good grades."* (Social Work Participant 3)

One of the teachers shared a story about a learner currently at the school who had to drop out:

> *"There's a child who had been doing grade 10 since 2017 until they dropped out. They are always outside, and we don't get their SBA tasks, because they don't do them as they are always outside. Even when you find them and instruct them to come and complete them, they struggle to complete them."* (Teacher Participant 2)

Based on the responses from the teacher participants, it is evident that the psychosocial challenges that learners experience while they are in grades 10-12 harm how they engage with their academic work.

Due to the low-performance levels in the school, the use of drugs and substances seems to be associated with the need to perform better in the exam. Learners may desire to do well as they know that if they don't, then they will fail. This was reported by one of the participants:

> *"Right in the middle of an examination you find a learner that is drunk, and you can't expect a miracle for them to perform well. For some of them, if they take marijuana, they think that they will feel so smart and wise but that's not true that if you take it, you perform wonders in the examination.* (Teacher Participant 2).

Contrary to the teacher's opinion on the need for learners to excel in academics leading to the use of substances, Cobb-Clack et al (2013) noted that those with low academic marks, low motivation and come from challenging family backgrounds may be more likely to use marijuana. While Sahu and Sahu (2015) highlight that psychosocial issues such as peer pressure, lack of social support, social attitudes, low self-esteem and psychological distress lead to substance abuse amongst learners. These mentioned psychosocial issues are similar to what has been reported as challenges for learners by teachers.

The same teacher participant further went on to describe the impact that it has on the learners' behaviour as they start engaging in criminal activities.:

> *"They also start stealing when they are drug addicts as they want something that will feed their addiction. They steal other learners' belongings in class and teachers' belongings. For instance, if I leave my phone like this, in a second it will be gone. They take the other learners' calculators from their bags and go sell them in other schools."* (Teacher Participant 2)

Another teacher explained that while the learners are at home, they become abusive to their families intending to get money from them:

> *"They affect their home behaviours because we tend to find that they become violent at home. Their guardians and parents come to the school telling us that they tend to be violent at home because they want cash from them."* (Teacher Participant 3)

There is a clear association between psychosocial challenges such as the use of substances and teenage pregnancy with school drop-out rates and academic performance. This is supported by Strassburg et al (2010) who argue that teenage pregnancy, a lack of interest in schooling, and previously failing a grade or being behind in schoolwork were some of the reasons why learners left school.

4.3.3.2 Social Relationships

Learners during the developmental stage of adolescence learn to build relationships with their peers and others in their lives; they learn to establish their roles in their social settings and also within the home environment; and also learn how to develop appropriate social connections. Some of the learner participants reported that their social relationships were affected by some of the challenges that they face at home and school:

> *"They affect my wellbeing because sometimes at school, besides being a social butterfly and wanting to be around people, I become so disengaged and don't want to be around people as I am so used to being alone. I even disengage from the whole world. It's not only at school but even when I am around other people, I just want to be in my own corner and confined."* (Participant Learner 20, School 2)

> *"These challenges at home affecting my wellbeing because every time when I'm with my friends I feel small due to the way I'm treated at home sometimes I ended up losing hope and not believing in myself. Sometimes I feel unloved."* (Participant Learner 7, School 1).

The involvement of learners in the community in which they are in expresses "greater feelings of satisfaction with life" (Ruiz et al, 2012, p. 1020). The effects on social relationships mentioned by the learners are corroborated by Ruiz et al (2012) as they suggest that community engagement support the learners' adjustment as their self-image is improved, they tend to feel worthy and have some form of control over their personal lives. The extracts from learners' highlight that the learners don't feel a sense of worth and struggle with their self-image and self-concept.

4.3.3.3 Psychological influences

The learners experience many challenges and changes during the adolescence stages. This includes, but are not limited to emotional and psychological changes. The World Health Organisation (2012) states that because of the complexity of adolescence, learners are bound to experience some form of mental health-related challenge. This literature supports the

emotional and psychological experiences that learners have reported on below which have been caused by the psychosocial challenges in their homes and at school:

> *"[the challenges] affect me emotionally, because I've become someone who is filled with anger and hate, and I'm always depressed."* (Learner Participant 2, School 1)
>
> *"After the experience, I had with my teacher, I wasn't really myself in class anymore, I didn't even want to answer any questions. I didn't even want to interact and when she asks questions, I would just keep quiet, and I wasn't even doing her homework."* (Learner Participant 20, School 2)

> *"I have a low self-esteem*." (Learner Participant 4, School 1)

> *"These challenges at school affect my wellbeing by making me; feel un-useful, having mixed emotions, stressed and also affecting my health."* (Learner Participant 5, School 1).

One of the social work participants confirmed that these challenges that learners experience affect them psychologically and alluded to the effect of depression:

> *"Learners become are suicidal and most of the time in class, there would also be learners that are presenting with depressive thoughts or experiencing some form of stress caused by their home circumstances. They are affected in a very negative way."* (Social Work Participant 2)

When reporting on their home challenges and the effect it has on her, the learner said:

> *"Being depressed. I lose concentration both at home and at school. Not being able to finish my tasks and homework.* (Learner Participant 5, School 1)

> *"They are affecting me in a way that I actually thought that I am not worthy, I was not meant to be here, I kept thinking that my life is worthless, and I don't see the point of living.* (Learner Participant 18, School 2)

Another learner reported on the psychological effects her challenges have had on her. These have also impacted her nutritious health as she no longer eats healthy and sometimes spends the day with any food intake:

> *"They drain my energy, I lose hope, I feel demotivated and sometimes end up sleeping every time to avoid overthinking… [the challenges] affect me because I no longer watch what I eat. I would spend the whole on an empty stomach and I'm afraid that will affect my lifestyle not having a healthy lifestyle."* (Participant Learner 6, School 1).

The learner participants battle with psychological and emotional effects (i.e., depression, suicidal thoughts, feeling worthless, hopelessness) caused by the challenges that they experience at home and at school as confirmed by the above extract. They are also proof that the learners might experience some form of mental health challenges. None of the learner participants reported on being diagnosed with any mental health illness, but some of the emotional and psychological characteristics mentioned in their responses are symptoms of depression which Schulte-Körne (2016) explained as "difficulties in concentrating, lack of self-worth, low mood, joylessness, a loss of activities and interests, social withdrawal, giving up leisure activities, changes in appetite, sleep disruption, and in moderate to severe forms suicidal thoughts and acts."

4.3.3.4 Resilience

Human resilience is the capacity for individuals to use their biopsychosocial systems to recover from adversity and dysfunction (Ungar, 2015; Ungar, 2019). While many learners indicated that the challenges faced at home and school affected them academically, socially, psychologically, and emotionally, some learners expressed that they look beyond those effects by accepting them and working towards bettering themselves. This is a form of resilience as Chinyoka and Naidu (2014, p. 227) explained that children who portray such characteristics "are able to accept their adversity and benefit from school whilst living in dire poverty". Literature suggests that resilience amongst learners is dependent on their characteristics as well as support offered by their community in fostering wellbeing (Motsa & Morojele, 2017; Ungar, 2015). "For the vulnerable children resilience, therefore, involves the ability to exercise the human capital of agency to navigate and negotiate their way towards educational success supported by their social context" (Motsa & Morojele, 2017, p. 158). In contrary to the literature on resilience highlighting the support that learners receive from their community is

that these below extracts illustrate that the learners' individual agency has played a significant role in how they move past the psychosocial challenges that they face, with them pointing out that they learn from these experiences and develop stronger individual characters:

> *Every time when I see my parents struggle, I feel like finishing school and become their breadwinner because they suffer a lot as things are not going their way and that really makes me sad. Every time we go through these challenges, I grow stronger and stronger to a point I want to finish my grade 12 with an exemption."* (Learner Participant 12, School 1)

> *Firstly, it was hard, [the challenges at home] triggered my short temper until I accepted my situation and moved on with my life and I'm grateful for what I have. So, it has taught me a lesson for the rest of my life; sometimes in life, you don't always get what you want. You work hard for everything your heart desires."* (Learner Participant 14, School 2)

> *Sometimes at school is hard to focus because I can't concentrate on schoolwork knowing that I am not okay with what is happening at home. At school when I just think of giving up or in life, I remember changing my home background. The only things that I always remember."* (Learner Participant 10, School 1)

Another learner participant acknowledged that the challenges that they experience affect them, but because of how they perceive those challenges, they can look past them and perform well in school. This is supported by the notion that learners who can accept their adversities and become resilient tend to do perform better (Chinyoka & Naidu, 2014):

> *"Not that much as I keep telling myself that maybe there is someone going through more stuff than I am and still, I hit good grades so I don't think my problems at home are to affect my wellbeing at any chance because I do not wear my problem over my head and I know how to focus my energies to the right place."* (Learner Participant 9, School 1)

4.3.4 Early warning signs to challenges experienced by learners

The period of adolescence is marked by engagement in risky and unruly behaviours and heightened motivation to obtain arousal from rewards (Nock, Minnes & Alberts, 2017). While change is good during this period, learners tend to involve themselves in behaviours that impact their wellbeing. When the participants were probed on what they thought, based on their experiences were indicators that a learner may be experiencing the mentioned psychosocial challenges, many of the teacher and school social worker participants alluded to warning signs as indicators to the challenges faced by the learners, which include behavioural changes, social withdrawal, academic underperformance.

4.3.4.1 Behavioural changes

Experimentation is a natural part of the adolescence stage. Learners begin to try out new things, ideas and activities. Pringle et al (2018) explain that unhealthy behavioural patterns may develop as part of the experimentation process and it may be because of exposure to behaviours such as the use of substances and influences from peer groups. The participants reported that the learners' behaviour changes when they are experiencing these psychosocial challenges. It was reported that they are disrespectful to teachers, abscond class and will be absent from school:

> *"With teenage pregnancy, they stay absent a lot and also change in behaviour. They get cheeky towards the teachers. Most of the learners that get pregnant are those that weren't listening and were always absent."* (Teacher Participant 2)

> *"With drugs and gambling, they are always out of the class. When you even ask other learners, a specific learner is, they tell you that he is gambling, he is by the tuckshops."* (Teacher Participant 2).

> *"Too much of absconding from the class. then you know that this is very serious and when you look deeper into it you find that there is a ringleader and some of them are just following the ringleader, some of them think that it is a cool thing, and they end up joining for the sake of joining."* (Teacher Participant 1*)*

The use of drugs and gambling influences how the learners behave within the school environment, with their peers and with their teachers. The indicators of substance use may be

explained as disrespect for the earlier and the teachers (Nconsta & Shumba, 2013). Learners sometimes externalise their problems and this is can be observed through negative behavioural characteristics such as hyperactivity, aggressiveness, and anti-social behaviour (Pringle et al, (2017). All these are portrayed to the external world or those in the same setting as them.

One of the participants shared that learners also get involved in risky sexual behaviours:

> *Teachers will give the case that a certain learner was found in the class having sex with this learner. Still, in the same month or even in the same term you get reports of teachers complaining that the learner is sexually active, and this is what they are doing within the school premises, and you try to reach out to the parents and they come back to report that the learner has been presenting with the same problem even at home."* (Social Work Participant 2)

The above extract suggests that learners' engagement in sexual behaviours is a sign that they may be experiencing some form of psychosocial challenge. According to Pringle et al (2017), teenage sexual behaviours are common during adolescence and that such behaviours are accounted for through biological development, sexual preference and psychosocial factors such as the use of alcohol, engaging in risky behaviours, school problems and being involved in romantic relationships (Pringle et al., 2017).

4.3.4.2 Social withdrawal

Some participants reported that learners often become withdrawn socially when they are experiencing some of the psychosocial challenges that emanate from their home or school setting. The effects of the psychosocial challenges were reported to be antisocial behaviours and social withdrawal due to neglect:

> *"Some of them (learners) tend to be antisocial and some of them tend to be arrogant with you. They tend to want to confront you and that becomes very dangerous for us as educators."* (Teacher Participant 3)

> *"With neglect, when they called me, the learner was not interacting with anyone, even the teachers, but she was interested in class. She was not playing, not eating in school,*

she was not neat, and the uniform was torn and when they called me and while I was doing my assessment they told me that the child was living with the father." (Social Work Participant 1).

"You find the child who was bubbly, talkative and a people's person starts becoming withdrawn and their behaviour starts changing. The parents just blow it off and think that it is just a 'stage', whereas there is a problem deeper than that." (Social Work Participant 2).

The above-mentioned signs that a learner may be experiencing psychosocial challenges are supported By Crosson-Towner's (2005) description that a child who is neglected by exhibit signs of self-injurious behaviour which may be eating disorders or self-mutilation; the child not properly dressed and showing poor hygiene; and demonstrating unattended material needs.

4.3.4.3 Academic underperformance

Additional to change in behaviours, other participants highlighted that another indicator of these challenges is the drop in marks or underperformance:

"Their behaviours changes, leading to them dropping their results, they tend not to perform well." (Teacher Participant 3)

"Another indicator is the drop in academic performance." (Social Work Participant 3)

The above extract alludes to the notion that when learners are faced with psychosocial challenges, often not knowing how to respond to them, their academic performance is impacted. Psychosocial issues such as those that have been identified in this study; for example, neglect, bullying and exposure to poverty are noted to lead to poor concentration in class for the child, inability to cope in the school environment and poor attention to schoolwork, all resulting in poor academic performance (Crosson-Towner, 2005; Tsegaye, 2008; Vergottini, 2019).

4.3.5 Available support services

Learners shared different opinions and experiences concerning the support services that they receive at school. While others felt that the support that they received was enough, others did not think so. Learners indicated that they receive support from different places. These will be highlighted below.

4.3.5.1 Support from the school

Teachers play significant educational roles within the school environment. This includes creating favourable classroom conditions where learning can occur, teaching the curriculum content and taking up the role of assessments in which they establish what the learners know and can do (Looney et al, 2018). Though, due to learners spending more time at school than home, teachers are forced to take up additional roles of being guardians to the learners and support them through some of the challenges that they are faced with. Below extracts indicate that some learners seek support from their teachers when they experience different kinds of psychosocial challenges:

> *"I speak to a teacher, if unavailable, to a close friend. The reason for not talking to my teacher sometimes is because things are kept formal and they allow us to decide on our lives. Able to put our differences aside easily. With the sir, I can seek guidance or support on things related to the school curriculum. We find no reason to not be able to communicate but sometimes they are judgmental."* (Learner Participant 16, School 2)

> *"Our teachers sometimes talk to us and encourage us on what to do so we can improve in our studies and it does help but the only issue is doing what they say you should do to improve, for example, if they say practising more in maths will help you improve, it is hard to because sometimes you don't understand the work and it gets frustrating when you don't understand."*

> (Learner Participant 13, School 2)*"I sometimes stay after school and ask the teacher of a certain subject to give me his or her small-time explaining to me the schoolwork that I don't understand. I sometimes focus on learning in more than one way, instead of listening to a podcast, I try another way of learning. This includes describing what I have learned to a friend or taking notes. Educators have long noted that one of the best*

ways to learn something is to teach it to someone else. So, when experiencing these challenges, I talk to my classmates and educators to help me with where I lack on my school work." (Learner Participant 10, School 1)

I speak to my teacher because my teacher has been there for more than 5 years so she knows almost everything that happens, the only advice I'm still using that I took from her is that I have to remain the way I am inside if I change and become one of those young gangsters, I will never change and I will lose my career choice. She always taught me that to pass and avoid these challenges is to stick to my books and believe in what I want to achieve." (Learner Participant 11, School 1)

"...the teacher opened up WhatsApp online group chats to discuss problems with a certain aspect of the subject. Having the teacher's number so that we don't find it difficult to talk to them and ask when there is something you need to know about with the use of social media/ networking because after all communication is key." (Learner Participant 16, School 2)

The learner participants seem to talk to school staff who may have the direct solution to the problem or be responsible for attending to the problem. These problems may be related to how the school functions and problems that are subject content related. Only one learner participant expressed that they confide in the teacher as they seem to have built a trusting relationship with them. The teacher is reported to be supportive and encourages the learner to do well. Johnson (2017) argues even though learners have an innate desire to learn, the role of the teachers to support and motivate the learners is a crucial one to the learners' education process. The above extracts affirm that "the teacher's role in encouraging support of students' autonomy, relevance, and relatedness of the material increases motivation to learn…the teacher's ability to develop students' competence, interest in the subject taught, and perception of self-efficacy are all important factors that influence students' motivation to learn" (Johnson, 2017, p. 46). The below extract further highlights the support from teachers:

"The kind of support I at least received is such extra lessons to catch up on the missed work. Attending Saturday Engen classes for the field of subjects so things do not blow out of proportion. The teacher opened up WhatsApp online group chats to discuss problems with a certain aspect of the subject. Having the teacher's number so that we

don't find it difficult to talk to them and ask when there is something you need to know about with the use of social media/ networking because after all communication is key." (Learner Participant 16, School 2)

Other learners expressed that the school supported them through additional classes to cover content from their subject syllabus:

"They have a program called SSIP which is active on weekends and they bring tutors to teach and they do cover a lot of the syllabus. Even the food is better during the SSIP program as the food is healthier and changes frequently." (Learner Participant 9, School 1)

"The kind of support I at least received is such extra lessons to catch up on the missed work. Attending Saturday Engen classes for the field of subjects so things do not blow out of proportion..." (Learner Participant 16, School 2)

On the contrary to the above, some learners suggested that they were not being supported enough at the school as they expressed, they did not feel comfortable sharing these challenges with school staff. While the other learner participant felt that the school wasn't supportive of those that come from less advantaged backgrounds. This is an indication that learners are only supported academically, not social and emotionally as Mashau et al (2008) and Bojuwoye et al (2014) suggest they should be. The below extracts suggest that learners don't feel support by the school:

"At my school, they don't make you feel comfortable to talk about how you feel and all so you don't really have to waste your time with them." (Learner Participant 17, School 2)

"The school is not doing enough because my school is not doing anything about those children that are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. My school is even failing to give grade 12 students forms to apply to higher education institutions and also allowing me to enter computer lab just to apply at a higher education institution, they are always telling us it's for C.A.T students only." (Learner Participant 5, School 1)

When I'm experiencing challenges at school, I don't get any support even though I

would have tried to speak out. I decided to shut my mouth because I saw that nothing is going to happen even if I talk. It's just a waste of my time and my energy. (Learner Participant 7, School 1)

Some of these experiences shared in the above extracts collaborate the notion that learning support in school should include extra class instructions, academic mentoring, helping students develop study skills and curriculum advice (Bojuwoye et al, 2014). However, the support that learners receive also needs to extend to their social and emotional needs. These according to Bojuwoye et al (2014) include counselling or psychological and social work services, medical services, nutrition services such as feeding schemes, and any other form of support that will ensure that learners don't experience barriers to learning.

4.3.5.2 Role of school social workers

While the role of school social work may be easily understood from literature, due to the nature of the work done by school social workers, the roles and responsibilities are complex and not always easy to comprehend. School social workers are trained professionals whose roles traditionally include delivery of support services to learners and sometimes to teachers and other school staff. It also involves the provision of comprehensive support that addresses various outside school needs that impact the learners' education and academic performance, to promote social and emotional wellbeing of learners and to improve the school climate for the benefit of learners' psychosocial functioning (Finigan-Carr & Shaia, 2018). The teachers were asked about what they perceive to be the role of a social worker within the school setting. Teacher participants reported the following:

"It is very vital if we're to have it but there hasn't been one. I think being trained as a social worker you can understand these situations, be able to visit homes and try to call parents. I think being a trained social worker would also be able to handle it differently as compared to how we do it as teachers." (Teacher Participant 1)

"Currently, we don't have a social worker but if it was, it would be helpful. A lot of teachers did not do studies such as social work and counselling. There's very few of them that did remedial and counselling. So, if there is somebody who can come and help the teacher who doesn't know how to counsel. Some of us know how to counsel

from church and we bring our knowledge here. If someone is dealing specifically with these things, it would be helpful. It also has to be someone who does it regularly, not a once-off thing. They would have to come and do follow-ups with those learners." (Teacher Participant 2)

"We don't have a school social worker. it's a very important role and we definitely needed it." (Teacher Participant 3)

The above extracts suggest that teachers are partially aware of the role and duties of social workers in a school setting and its significance. They described the role of a school social worker to be associated with conducting home visits, providing counselling and attending to challenges faced by learners that teachers can't deal with. Though this description is correct on the role of school social workers, it does not fully capture the work that school social workers do with learners and within the school. It is limited and indicates limited understanding of the role of school social workers from the perspective of teachers. They acknowledged that they are not trained to provide the necessary support to learners, highlighting that school social workers are a need in schools. Finigan-Carr and Shaia (2018) draw a distinction between the work done by teachers and school social workers and how they both work together to support learners. An excellent teacher deploys various techniques to reach learners and help them understand the curriculum while excellent school social workers know that they need to explore and draw on numerous range of skills and knowledge to help learners deal with challenges that they are faced with, help them understand themselves better and build their resilience.

Social worker participants commented as follows:

"We take the role of being a broker. We don't take up a case for long, we just do assessments and then we refer them to the relevant units or organisations. We link the learners with services that they need help with." (Social Work Participant 1)

"Most of our role is to build a support system for the learners. Support through counselling, through linking the learners to the relevant stakeholders, the relevant resources that they maybe are needing at the time." (Social Work Participant 2)

The social work participant 2 further went on to explain that:

> *"As school social workers, we are short time based, we don't do a lot of things such as statutory work and a lot of things. Most of what we do is to identify and refer, we are those people that meet the learners at first hand when the learner has a problem, we identify their problem and then link them to the relevant stakeholder that would be able to take care of them. Even after linking them, we have to play a supportive role whereby we always have to do follow up and make sure that the learners."* (Social Work Participant 2*)*

> *"Our big role is to lift off the weight off the teachers' shoulders so that the teachers can focus on the curriculum and the learners can focus on academics."* (Social Work Participant 3*)*

All social worker participants are employed at a district level which means that their roles are different from those employed at the national and provincial levels. NACOSSWEP (2015) as cited in Vergottini and Weyers (2020, p.131) state that the role of the school social workers at district level includes providing support "to learners, parents, caregivers, educators, school-based support teams [SBST], school management teams and school governing bodies. At this level, a functionary's tasks could also include screening, the development and implementation of projects, the development of supportive infrastructure within schools, networking and remaining abreast of policies."

4.3.5.3 Support from friends

During adolescence, learners need to develop social relationships with their peers as they seek to develop their own identity and independence from their families (Flynn, Felmlee & Conger, 2017). Some participants reported that they seek support from their friends:

> *"My friends and I actually discuss this when we go home most of the time after school, I talk to them because they're experiencing the same challenges."* (Learner Participant 1, School 1)

"My best friend because she's also experiencing the same challenges that I experience. She is used to how I feel or how I react when it comes to these challenges and also how furious I get." (Learner Participant 5, School 1)

"My friends because they are also experiencing the same thing as I am." (Learner Participant 13, School 2)

"I talk to my best friend. She has been there since we were 5 years old. I talk to her because she can relate, and she makes me happy. She helps boost my self-esteem." (Learner Participant 15, School 2)

The above extracts suggest that the learners confront and share the challenges that they experience with their friends because they share similar experiences, they felt that they better understand them and had a positive impact on their lives. Shin and Ryan (2012) support these extracts as they mention that friends are often used as coping resources and that friendships have been found to buffer the negative consequences of peer problems. These friendships are usually built of trust and intimacy and are beneficial for an adjustment (Vitaro, Boivin, & Bukowski, 2009)

4.3.5.4 Support from external organizations

When asked about any additional support that the learners received, the following was reported:

"The support that I receive at school during these challenges; sometimes the police officers come at school and check that is the school still doing good and also try to find those gangsters and drug dealers at school. Social workers, arrive and talk to us and give us some advice if we want to get rid of those challenges." (Learner Participant 11, School 1)

One of the social work participants illustrated that some schools have social auxiliary workers. This is however not the case with the two schools that have been selected:

"There are some schools that have NGOs which are based in the school and luckily for these schools the NGOs has social auxiliary workers and, in most cases, they would be the ones who act as the school-based support team by interacting with children and

then identifying such psychosocial problems and then referring them to me." (Social Work Participant 3)

Police and social workers seem to respond to the social and psychosocial challenges that learners experience at school. Lamont, Macleod and Wilkin (2011) explain that police have a duty at schools to reduce the prevalence of crime, anti-social behaviours and victimisation of learners and even challenges unacceptable behaviours. This supports the work that police officers at the school as mentioned in the above extract. While the social workers are known to help learners with their emotional issues and help them solve personal problems that they experience (Bojuwoye et al, 2014).

4.3.6 Barriers faced by social workers in service delivery in schools

Due to the challenges experienced by the Department of Education and Department of Social Development in achieving an agreement on the placement of social workers in school, social workers are experiencing various barriers when rendering services to school and the learners.

4.3.6.1 Confusion about the role of social workers

There seems to be great confusion about the roles and responsibilities of school social workers. This was reported by one of the social work participants who explained that social workers in other fields do not completely understand how the intervention is provided and how cases are handled by school social workers. While another social worker expressed that they are expected to play the role of *'superman'* at the schools by the teachers and school staff. This resonates with Higy, Haberkon, Pope and Gilmore (2012) findings that within state school systems, there is still confusion and a lack of knowledge about the roles of the school social workers. The consequence of this confusion is that the social workers working in schools are affected, the individual field of school social work is discredited and children and families who would benefit from the social work services are impacted:

" South African as a whole, especially here in JHB, we don't really understand the role of school social work because you find challenges when you refer a case as a [school] social worker to another social worker they feel like why she didn't do this [case] on her own. They don't understand the role that we work with children but our job is to just access and identify, then refer. They feel like we don't work, why don't you address

this case on your own, why don't you go to court on your own" (Social Work Participant 2)

Another social work participant reported on the schools and teachers' expectations about the role of the school workers:

> *"Basically, they expect us to play the superman role because when a social worker is at the school, they expect all their problems to be alleviated which is not realistic but mostly they would expect us to take care of their extra burden which are psychosocial challenges that the learners face so that they can focus on academics."* (Social Work Participant 3).

The school social worker field in South Africa is still developing, it is no surprise that some people in different fields of practice do not clearly understand it. The impact of this seems to be great as it affects the intervention processes at the school level. A clear and systematic guideline on the roles and responsibilities of school social workers needs to be established (Vergottini, 2019). In addition, school social workers need to improve their "visibility, viability, and value" (Altshuler & Webb, 2009, p. 208).

4.3.6.2 Lack of resources from the Department of Social Development

The availability of resources also acts as a barrier for school social workers. All social workers rendering services to school are employed by the Department of Social Development and the social worker participants of this research study reported that the greatest barrier was vehicle use where a few departmental vehicles are used by the many social workers; those in the field of school social work and those in other fields to travel to many areas around Johannesburg South:

> *"A barrier is resources, and it is a big problem because you find that in the unit we were about 13 and now it's worse as there are now 25 people who are allocated 3 cars to cover the whole Johannesburg area. With us going to the schools was a big problem because you don't get to build relationships with the learners you only go when a case is referred to you or when you have a program" (Social Worker 2).*

Another social worker shared the same sentiments:

> *"Another barrier that we have is that of resources from our own office, maybe you find that we just have 3 cars and in the whole unit, we are a group of 26 social workers. So imagine if 26 of us need to share 3 cars and we are servicing more than 1500 schools around JHB area"* (Social Worker Participant 3).

The above extract also reports on an issue of the shortage of school social workers in South Africa that Pretorius (2016) highlights. The shortage limits the effectiveness and adequacy of services that school social workers can provide across different schools. Social Work Participant 3 alluded that there may be 26 school social workers servicing about 1500 schools in JHB. Vergottini (2019) found that there were insufficient school social workers at most levels of educations and that school social workers were forced to cope with large numbers of school and learners that require their services.

4.3.6.3 Allocation of space in schools

Another barrier that social workers experience is the allocation of space to conduct sessions with learners at schools. In reporting on their experiences, two social workers explained that they use teachers' offices which do not seem to be a conducive environment for the session and the learner appears not to be comfortable to freely talk about their challenges. The below extracts bring into light one of the crucial difficulties faced by school social workers which is space allocation and its impact on the intervention process with the learners. Due to this issue, social workers are unable to intervene successfully and establish trusting confidential relationships with learners. Confidentiality is both a legal and ethical issue in social work and Reyneke (2020) explains that lack of confidentiality at schools is the main concern for social workers. While the South African Council for Educators (SACE) only makes mention of confidentiality once, the South African Council of Social Services Profession (SACSSP) refers to the issue of confidentiality many times under its code of conduct (Reyneke, 2020). This illustrates that social workers need to ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times and it is difficult to do so when there is no secure space for intervention session:

> *"They don't have space where we can see the learners. The school will just call you and say you must use one of the teachers' offices. Sometimes you find that the teacher*

is there. The learners are always uncomfortable to talk as they fear that maybe someone will pass by and see them, or a teacher would come in" (Social Work Participant 1)

"We don't have resources when we go to schools to see learners where you sit at the reception, and everybody is up and down" (Social Work Participant 2)

Failure to ensure confidentiality will result in learners feeling 'uncomfortable' and 'fearful'. This is supported by Hannan and Kalisha -Koran (2014) as they highlight that losing the trust of the clients can hinder communication from them and that trust is essential for a good relationship to be established and developed. Without confidentiality, learners may not be successfully helped.

4.3.6.4 Parents' involvement

One of the social workers described that parents' involvement in the learners' life was one of the barriers that they experience. The social worker further went on to suggest that parents are resistant to the process when they are attending to psychosocial challenges experienced by learners such as parental neglect:

"It would be the co-corporation from the parents. There would be parents that would not co-corporate especially when a case is referred to me and I'm told by a teacher that there is neglect that they are picking up or they have seen some injuries on the child and the child does not want to talk. Then when you go conduct a home visit parents become resistant" (Social Worker Participant 1).

Vergottini (2019) too found that parental involvement was low as parents were not cooperating with the school social workers.

4.3.7 Improving the psychosocial services in schools

4.3.7.1 Voice of learners

Support services at a school level need to respond to the academic, social, and emotional needs of the learners. Therefore, a positive school climate needs to be created as it plays a crucial role in how the learners develop within the school setting and lead to a positive school experience for them. Wang and Degol (2016) state that a positive school climate may be defined based on

a school setting that encompasses a school's atmosphere, culture, values, resources and social network. It is also defined as a school setting where great emphasis is placed on the school norms; goals; interpersonal relationships (amongst teachers, learners, management, parents); and good teaching and learning practices. According to the learner participants' responses in the below extracts, provision of counselling services, physical activities such as sports and strengthening school security are regarded as some of the important aspects that are needed to improve learning and contribute to a positive school climate. The findings of Bujowoye et al (2014, p. 10) resonate with the extracts that support needed in schools for learners includes "sports activities and coaches, security guards at schools and more school-based psychologists and social workers to address their emotional needs or solve personal problems".

Many learner participants advocate for the needs of professionals who specialise in counselling, these including school social workers, psychologists, and counsellors. This need by the learners is supported by Huan et al (2014) who state that children in developing countries are more in need of counselling services because of the high rates of dropouts, failure rates, teenage pregnancy, violence, and they are more likely to receive less psychological and social support from their families:

> *"I would make sure I get all my school learners some one-on-one counselling, so I get to know who is coming from broken homes and meet their parents."* (Learner Participant 2, School 1)

> *"Get a therapist who will come on Fridays to help learners who are traumatized and need help."* (Learner Participant 1, School 1)

> *"I would organize a student council where learners are able to talk to their peers or someone who is approachable to that they are more vocal about how they feel, and they are more communicative about what is bothering them." (Learner Participant 19, School 2)*

> *"I would do things that would be able to build them and their self-esteem like sports, activities, events. I have never engaged in any sports because there are no sports, no*

events, no excursions, they don't have any counselling group for children like us who are experiencing these changes." (Learner Participant 18, School 2)

"If I was the principal, I would invite social workers for those learners who are emotionally and mentally abused at their homes and advice learners to talk if they are experiencing any problems at home or school." (Learner Participant 8, School 1)

"Because I know children or teenagers have problems in their personal lives and even in their academic lives, I would consider bringing a school psychologist or therapists to allow learners to at least have someone to speak to and somehow distress." (Learner Participant 8, School 1)

Other learners expressed the need for a good security system at schools to ensure the safety of learners:

"I could also tighten the school security to the point that even when you pass by the school you don't think of doing anything bad." (Learner Participant 6, School 1)

If I was the principal of the school, I was going to hire more security to surround the school to make sure that there are no gangsters that are going to jump inside the school and bully other kids. As a principal, I was going to make sure that each and every learner is being searched before he/ she enters the school to make sure that there are no weapons around the school premises." (Learner Participant 7, School 1)

The below extracts report on the other forms of support that learners placed emphasis on such as transport, motivation, school resources and peer groups:

"I would've tried to organize free transport for learners who stay far from the school. Like other schools, I would've organized school buses. Another thing, I would've been more supportive, and I would be encouraged my colleagues to be more supportive as well." (Learner Participant 1, School 1)

“To encourage them to work very hard and get good marks. To have sessions to empower themselves.” (Learner Participant 8, School 1)

“Be patient for my learners and hear what they have to say. Do speeches at assembly before they go to their classes. Encourage them to pray. Always value their existence and their time. Keep an eye on them so that they feel noticed. Encourage them to speak up. Get along with them.” (Learner Participant 5, School 1)

“I could have organized motivational speakers to motivate children who have lost hope and ask for funders who can fund the school with resources that will help students to do their schoolwork.” (Learner Participant 6, School 1)

“I would support learners who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and try my level best to appreciate those learners who are obtaining good marks at my school so that they will keep on doing the work and sure that all students are treated equally.” (Learner Participant 7, School 1)

“I would try to make at least initiatives to bring tutors at school and I would try to have the whole school Wi-Fi routers; 1 for every grade if not 2 for every grade and make them free for every learner to use because online learning is a concept that each and every high school institution should support.” (Learner Participant 9, School 1)
"Help find school equipment because books boost our marks in schools and show us that there is hope through access to knowledge. But what we need to know is that teachers are our most important learning resources.” (Learner Participant 10, School 1)

"I would open a lot of groups for learners experiencing challenges and make them feel comfortable to talk to anyone if they can't talk with their parents. I would act like their mother, their best friend, their sister and I would make kids love me like their own family members and if they don't have one, I would be one." (Learner Participant 17, School 2)

> *"I would organise a student council where learners are able to talk to their peers or someone who is approachable so that they are more vocal about how they feel, and they are more communicative about what is bothering them."* (Learner Participant 19, School 2)

All suggested additional support reported by the learner participants were currently lacking or not present at the schools. While some of the responses from the participants were different, they all spoke to each other's needs within the school environment. The support suggested by the participants benefits all learners; contributes to and impacts their academic performance and their social and emotional development. Motivation from the teachers and peer groups, as mentioned by the learner participants will help learners that have become demotivated in their schoolwork and peer groups will assist those learners to have healthier social relationships and space where they can feel open to sharing challenges that they can't share with their parents and other adults. Being part of a peer support group is noted to have a positive impact on the learners' satisfaction with life, improve their social reputation as they are integrated and active within a school social community. Additionally, the need for support or counselling services by social workers is most crucial in the school setting to create awareness about various social issues that might affect learners, assist in their stable emotional and mental health, provide a platform for learners to explore their psychosocial experience in-depth, assist learners to achieve their potential and also become responsible citizens (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019; Pretorius, 2016; Reyneke, 2020).

4.3.7.3 Approaches by teachers

Based on the information shared by the teacher participants, their roles and duties within the school stretch beyond just being teachers or educators. The teachers were asked about the individual roles that they fulfil in the lives of the learners that experience these various psychosocial challenges. In their responses, they expressed that their roles include, but are not limited to being counsellors, parents, motivators, and mediators:

> *"And you just continue to motivate and advise. This morning I went to classes to remind them that we are left with only three weeks and from there on, it's the exams time. you can tell that they're listening to you, but you realize that during the day they just all over the show."* (Teacher Participant 1)

"To counsel them, follow up, go to their homes, talk to their parents; sometimes the parents don't even come, but that's my role. It is also to talk to the learners, if they don't listen to me, I then escalate it by calling the parent and SGB. But it starts with the grade HOD who has to first try and mediate." (Teacher Participant 2)

"The most important role is that we have to be counsellors, sometimes be parents to them, ensure that the teachers also play their role of counsellors and not ignore when there's a problem with the child and also be the best support that we can be for the learners." (Teacher Participant 3)

The roles mentioned in the extracts above are collaborated by Roger (2004) as cited in Babedi (2013) who identifies the roles of teachers in support include being a mentor, facilitator, change-maker, mediator, a tear-wiper and a philosopher. In addition to these roles, a teacher is a caregiver, a motivator and a listener as suggested in the above extracts. Due to the complexities of the psychosocial challenges that learners experience, teachers must have some form of training that will help in providing successful intervention to the learners. Babedi and Pillay (2019) highlight that school teachers are inadequately prepared to support learners with such contexts. This leads to them not knowing how to attend to some problems that learners are faced with or struggle with providing successful intervention. When the teachers were asked about the barriers that they face, the below was reported:

"Personally, for me sometimes is the language barrier but I always make sure that I go with someone who knows vernacular and was able to assist them in that way." (Teacher Participant 3)

The teacher continued to say that:

"Sometimes you find that their parents or their guidance just don't want to listen to their own thing that's the problem they don't think that you should be calling them or bothering them with these things and that you're just interfering in issues of their

households and you have learners that a fear and say no ma'am don't come to my house if you come to my house my father will hit me." (Teacher Participant 3)

"You'd ask the parent to be involved but they would tell you that they are working. Also, with the learners as you find that they have confided in you but there are things that they don't want to share but you can see that this child wants to speak out." (Teacher Participant 2).

None of the teacher participants mentioned being part of the School-Based Support Team (SBST) when they were asked about their other roles in the school. The SBST was established in schools to address barriers to learning that learners face through developing techniques that support both learners and teachers (Department of Basic Education, 2001). This team is often made up of Life Orientation teachers who hold relevant knowledge on challenges faced by learners and ways to respond to them.

Given that the teacher participants were not trained to render psychosocial support to learners, they were asked to reflect on how they deal with challenges faced by learners bought to them:

"Firstly, you must try and make them feel protected and secured. I try to ease them so that they can relax until they can talk about everything. If you can't, assure them to say that whatever they're disclosing to you it's between you and them." (Teacher Participant 1)

"It depends on the situation. There are situations that I can't just sit with and not do anything, for instance; when a learner says they have suicidal thoughts. I speak to the learners and help them see how dangerous it is and it will lead to you certain consequences, I then suggest that we get someone to help, then allow them to decide on what they want. If they say 'yes, mem', then I involve parents. But normally I keep everything to myself and try to help them where I can." (Teacher Participant 2)

Teacher 3 shared the same experience as the other teachers as he said:

"We try the best way we can to try and assist them and personally, we've visited homes to assist learners; to see where the problem is, who the problem is and how best we can

assist them. We've listened to them if they don't want us to get involved, we don't get involved but we try our best to help them whichever way we can." (Teacher Participant 3)

The responses received from the teachers indicate that they have to take up a certain supportive role and use different communication skills and values in engaging the learners. The skills that have been highlighted in these responses include listening skills, empathy, probing, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. These are all important for successful communication and teachers to be able to understand and try to assist the learners with their challenges. The value highlighted is confidentiality in which is important for a trusting relationship to be developed between the learner and the teacher.

4.3.7.3 Approaches by social workers

Due to the challenges that learners face being noticed in the school setting, the social worker participants reported that they are not the first to observe or notice as they are not based in schools. Rather, the teachers are the first to notice and then contact school social workers to come to intervene.

Social worker 1 said the following when explaining the first thing that happens when they get to the school:

"In most of the times, when we get there, the teachers give us a description of the problem, the whole problem [of the learner]. (Social Work Participant 1)

In attending to a case such as bullying, social worker 1 explains that an assessment needs to be the first step to gather information about the challenges that the learner is experiencing, the following was said:

"We are under social development when the department of education calls us, they will say 'I have a learner here, Sipho', he complained of being a bully or he is being bullied, we go there with the mind that he is bullied. So we then do further assessments on what's happening" (Social Work Participant 1)

Some of the social workers explained that when a case is related to the suicide of a learner within the school premises it is important to provide debriefing. Terblanche and van Wyk (2014) state that debriefing provided by the social workers need to be immediate and should focus on those that are directly affected and those that are indirectly affected or those that witnessed the incident:

> *"You get cases whereby you are told that the learner has attempted to commit suicide or a learner has committed. A lot of those cases we pick them up when a case of suicide has happened within the school. So when we go to the school, we go for debriefing and trauma debriefing for the learner that has succeeded in the cause. So we go to give them debriefing and that's where these cases arise where they open up and tell us that I have tried something like this, I have been trying to do something like this, others are suicide attempts that were not successful whereby the learner has been admitted to the hospital and the hospital will give us the learners profile, we then go to the school and make sure that we follow up and give them support after that."* (Social Work Participant 2)

Debriefing forms part of trauma and counselling support within a school setting and is very essential to respond to crises. Social workers must provide trauma management support which Terblanche and van Wyk (2014) described as including debriefing for traumatised individuals and helping lessen or prevent long-term challenges and dysfunctions for those affected.

4.4 Summary

This chapter presented and discussed findings from the data received from the three different participants' groups: the learners, teachers, and school social workers. These finds were presented according to eight themes with sub-themes. The theoretical framework underpinning the study and sections of the literature review were incorporated in this chapter to support or contrast the findings. The following and final chapter of the research outlines how the objectives of the study were achieved and the key findings of this research study and conclusions are presented. Recommendations are made for applicable stakeholders and possible future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Following the presentation and discussion of findings, this chapter provides a summary of the findings by outlining how the different aims and objectives of the study were achieved and outlining the main findings based on the findings presented and discussed in Chapter 4. At the end of the chapter, a conclusion and recommendations are made for the Department of Education (DSD), the Department of Social Development (DSD), the secondary schools and for future research.

5.2 Aims of the research study

i. To explore the psychosocial challenges experienced by grade 10-12 learners in two Johannesburg government schools.

The achievement of the aim was guided by the following research question; *'what are the psychosocial challenges experienced by secondary school learners in South African government schools in Johannesburg?'*

ii. To explore the perceptions of teachers and social workers on how psychosocial challenges and psychosocial support services can influence learners' performance and wellbeing.

The achievement of the aim was guided by two research questions, one for the teacher participants group and another for the school social worker participants group; '*what are teachers' perceptions on how psychosocial challenges influence learner's performance?'* and *'how do school social workers think psychosocial support services should be rendered to secondary school learners?'*

5.2.1 Achievement of the aims

The first aim of the research study was achieved through the following objectives:

Objective 1: This objective was achieved through a literature review focusing on psychosocial challenges of adolescents in secondary school and in chapter 4 where the collected data was presented and discussed under the following themes: psychosocial challenges, and social challenges.

Objective 2: Like the above, this second objective was also achieved through a literature review focusing on psychosocial challenges of adolescents in secondary school and in chapter 4 where the collected data was presented and discussed under the theme: factors contributing to psychosocial challenges.

Objective 3: This objective was also achieved through a literature review focusing on psychosocial support services in schools, the definition of psychosocial services in schools, school-based support services, nutrition, and in chapter 4 where the collected data was presented and discussed under the theme: available support services.

The second aim of the research study was achieved through the following objectives:
Objective 4: This objective was also achieved through a literature review focusing on psychosocial challenges of adolescents in secondary school and in chapter 4 where the collected data was presented and discussed under the themes: influence of challenges on learners' well-being and, early warning signs to challenges experienced by learners.

Objective 5: Similar to the above, this objective was also achieved through a literature review focusing on psychosocial support services in schools, definition of psychosocial services in schools, school-based support services and in chapter 4 where the collected data was presented and discussed under the themes: influence of challenges on learners' well-being, the role of social workers in schools, barriers faced by social workers in service delivery in schools, and improving the psychosocial services in schools.

Objective 6: This objective was also achieved through a literature review focusing on relevant legislations, policies, procedures, and guidelines, and in chapter 4 where the collected data was presented and discussed under the theme: improving the psychosocial services in schools.

5.3 Key Findings and Conclusions

5.3.1 Finding 1: Many psychosocial challenges within the home and school setting are faced by learners.

The findings of this research study show that learners from the two selected schools experience numerous psychosocial challenges within the home and school environments. With the first focus on their home environment, it was found that the learners come from poor or less advantaged households, and this affected them academically, emotionally, psychologically, and their social wellbeing. Most of the learners expressed that household poverty affected them. Poverty was found to exhibit itself in the home living conditions such as overcrowded homes, lack of resources at home to support learning, low or no household income and household chores that impacted the learners' schoolwork. It was found that learners live in

overcrowded homes, with many family members living in a small living space. Lack of resources to support learning such as computer devices and data bundles were found to be a challenge as learners couldn't complete their school-related work. Low or no household income as either one of the adults at home were working and earning a low income or that no one at home was working at all which led to the learners experiencing hungry or not getting their basic needs met.

The findings also show that learners experienced emotional challenges due to the lack of support from their family members. The form of emotional challenges experienced was mostly described as '*feelings of loneliness', 'low self-esteem'* and *'stress'* caused by having no one to talk to home about the struggles they are faced related to their adolescence stage. Though none of the learner participants was medically diagnosed with any mental health illnesses, their responses alluded to signs of negative emotional experiences that could trigger unstable mental health. These were found to be due to lack of emotional support at home, worry about the future, struggling with self-concept and self-image.

With regards to challenges faced in the school setting, the findings indicated that learners struggle with their schoolwork such as comprehending and applying some of the basic skills necessary for academic success (i.e., studying skills and time management skills). Additionally, it was found that learners struggle with mathematics and mathematical literacy and that schools either did not have the learning resources to support learning or had limited resources. Other social challenges that were found to be experienced by learners were crime and violence in schools, bullying, substance abuse, gambling, teenage pregnancy, and distance to school.

5.3.1.1 Conclusion

The psychosocial challenges faced by learners in their home setting are related to the families' household circumstances such as their household income and living conditions, and lack of support from their family members. While in the school setting, the psychosocial challenges faced by learners are related to basic skills necessary for academic success, crime and violence and social issues such as substance abuse and teenage pregnancy, and distance to school.

5.3.2 Finding 2: Various causes of the psychosocial challenges faced by learners at home and at school.

The causes of the psychosocial challenges at home were identified as poverty which was influenced by unemployment in the households and influenced by single household income and lack of support from parents/ guardians. While the challenges at school were identified to be caused by poor school governance as crime and violence rates in school premises were aggravated. Additionally, there was a shortage of learning resources which impacted greatly how learners engaged with some of their academic tasks. Academic challenges were identified to be caused by poor time management and lack of prioritization skills of schoolwork. The findings on causes of psychosocial challenges at school further indicated that teachers' attitudes, to some degree, are the cause with participants alluding to not understanding some of the teaching methods used by the teachers and that teachers' low morale contributed to the academic challenges that learners face. It was indicated that *"old teachers"* need to be replaced with *"new, fresher and motivated teachers."*

5.3.2.1 Conclusion

The psychosocial challenges that learners are faced with are as a result of their interaction with their school and home environment, i.e, their home circumstances and parental support; crime and violence at school; support resources at school; studying skills; and teachers' attitudes towards teaching.

5.3.3 Finding 3: The psychosocial challenges faced by the learners negatively affects them.

The findings indicated that psychosocial challenges faced by learners both at school and at home affect their school achievements as learners academically underperform, drop out from school, become demotivated and fear for their safety while at school. In addition to this, they are affected socially, emotionally, and psychologically. Their social relationships are impacted as they become anti-social and struggle with their self-concept or self-image in the presence of their peers and others. While the emotional and psychological effects include negative emotions, stress, depression, feelings of loneliness, an impact on their self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness.

5.3.3.1 Conclusion

The psychosocial related challenges faced by learners impact their academic performance, social relationships, identity and self-concept, and mental health.

5.3.4 Finding 4: Noticeable indicators that some learners experience psychosocial challenges.

The indicators that learners in grades 10-12 were experiencing psychosocial challenges needed to be explored with the intention of better understanding the effects of the challenges reported on. It was found that learners' behaviour changes as they become more disrespectful to elders and teachers; their school absenteeism increases and they often abscond from class; they portray an aggressive and anti-social or socially withdrawn behaviour; they join gangs and squads that negatively influence them; they engage in risky sexual behaviours which can be observed and noted within the school premises and in their homes, and through teenage pregnancy.

5.3.4.1 Conclusion

Learners that are experiencing psychosocial challenges are noticed from their change in behaviours or engaging in risky behaviours, lack of commitment to school and being involved in unhealthy social interactions and relationships.

5.3.5 Finding 5: Learners seek and receive support from various sources.

Through the data collected from learners, in the face of adversity or exposure to these challenges, the findings indicated that some learners have developed a sense of resilience. This is how the learners support themselves. This resilience is portrayed in how they respond to challenges or struggles that affect them at home and school. While not all learners from this research study indicated that the challenges that they face in the different settings made them *'accept their situation and move on with life'*, that those experiences *'taught them a lesson'*, that they *'grow stronger'* and that '*when they think about giving up, they remember their background'*, it was found that friends, teachers and family members played a significant role in how the learners build their resilience character.

The participants held different views about the support services that were rendered to learners at school. The findings of the research study indicate that learners seek support from their teachers and close friends. Support seeking behaviours by learners to teachers were found to

be influenced by the close relationship between the two parties and because of knowledge that particular teachers held. While support seeking behaviours by learners to their friends and peers was found to be influenced by the closeness of the friendships and because of the connectedness between the learners as they felt that they experienced similar challenges, therefore, they could easily confide in them.

It was found that the forms of support that learners receive in the two selected schools included motivation and encouragement from teachers and academic support which included extra lessons and guidance from teachers on study skills. Contrary to this, it was found that some learners felt that they did not receive enough support from their respective schools with learners expressing that they did not feel comfortable sharing their challenges with school staff. External support received by learners was identified as to be coming from police services and social workers. The findings from the learners and teachers' participant groups about support from social workers contradicted each other as some learners shared that *"social workers arrived…",* while all teachers responses resonated with *"we don't have a social work…"*

The learners were asked how they would do things differently if they were the school principal to support learners and the findings indicated that they all seem to advocate for a positive school environment in which the following services are made available; counselling, physical activities/ sports, tight school security, enough school resources to support learning, motivation for learners and the establishment peer support groups.

5.3.5.1 Conclusion

Some learners have developed resilience to the psychosocial challenges that they are exposed to at home and school. This is one way that they support themselves through the different challenges. Other learners sought and received support from their friends as it is easy to confide in them because of being familiar with each other and experiencing similar challenges. Learners that felt comfortable sharing their challenges with school staff sought and received motivational and academic support from them. Learners advocate for a positive school environment to support them with the challenges that they experience.

5.3.6 Finding 6: The role of teachers in supporting learners is complex.

To the challenges with getting teachers from school 2 to participate in the study, all three teacher participants in the study came from school 1. Therefore, the perceptions shared are from the school in which they currently teach. The role of teachers was found to be complex within the school setting which includes being a motivator, mediator, parent/ caregiver, and counsellor. While some of these roles may not necessarily need training, it is essential that whoever provides counselling to another person has some form of training to do so. It was found that, depending on the challenges that the learners face, teachers sometimes struggle with assisting learners. Some of the struggles and barriers that they experience included language barriers, dealing with resistant parents and households where they were perceived to be interfering in family affairs.

5.3.6.1 Conclusion

Teachers' roles extend beyond just teaching, but to being caregivers and providing the necessary support to learners such as being counsellors to learners experiencing difficulties at school. Most teachers are not trained to provide counselling in the school settings and due to this, they struggle to successfully support learners.

5.3.7 Finding 7: The role of school social workers is important but not fully understood and supported.

The finding of this research study support that school social workers are a great need in school to render psychosocial support to learners. Based on the data received on the perceived role of social workers by teachers, the teacher participants alluded to the importance of school social workers being as the school to assist learners with their psychosocial challenges. It was also found that there was no presence of social workers in the selected schools.

The findings indicated that though the role of a school social worker is clear in the literature, the field of the school social worker within the South African context is still unclear as there is a lack of confusion on the roles and duties of the school social work field. Apart from the field of school social work still needing to improve its "visibility, viability and value", it was found that there is a lack of resources and support from the Department of Education and from respective schools which impacted how services to learners are provided. Parental involvement

and lack of understanding of the role of school social work by other social workers were found to be a barrier that school social workers faced when rendering services to schools and learners.

5.3.7.1 Conclusion

There is minimum presence of school social workers in government schools due to the shortage of social workers, lack of resources and support from Department of Education and also due to the confusion on the field of school social work. Parental involvement and social workers in different fields' lack of understanding of school social work's role which impacts on service provision at schools and for learners. Teachers believe that the presence of a school social worker at the schools is crucial for supporting learners.

5.3.8 Finding 8: Teachers and school social workers take different approaches to support learners.

Teachers and school social workers' approaches to learners showing signs of psychosocial challenges differ. It was found that teachers are the first to notice the behaviours that learners may be experiencing these challenges and are the first to observe learners who are struggling psychosocially. It was found that teachers take up a role similar to being counsellors. Teachers use various skills when dealing with learners, this includes the use of interviewing and communication skills, critical thinking skills and problem-solving skills; values such as confidentiality and taking an approach that seeks to develop a trusting relationship with learners.

In comparison, school social workers' approach was found to be different because they are trained to provide such services to learners. In schools where the school social workers have been called to provide support to learners before, the teachers/ school staff would brief the school social worker about the challenges of the learner, providing all needed and relevant information to the school social workers. From there on, the intervention approach would be depended on the psychosocial issue at hand. An assessment was part of the approach that school social workers were found to be using in their first encounter with the learners, while with cases such as an act of suicide within the school premises, the school social workers' role is to provide debriefing and trauma debriefing.

5.3.8.1 Conclusion

Teachers and school social workers take different approaches when providing support to learners displaying signs of psychosocial problems. Teachers use an approach similar to counselling that includes interviewing skills, while the school social workers follow a structured approach that involves liaising with teachers/ school staff about the specific challenged learners, conducting appropriate assessments and appropriate intervention thereafter.

5.4 Recommendations

The expected outcomes of the research study were to explore the psychosocial challenges faced by learners in grades 10-12 in two Johannesburg South government schools and to explore the perceptions of teachers and social workers on how the psychosocial challenges and support services can influence learner's performance and well-being. Therefore, the findings of the study have been presented and discussed in chapter 4, and summaries in this current chapter. These findings have the potential to influence future research on the psychosocial experiences of learners with a focus on different contexts and with attention drawn to some of the specific psychosocial challenges highlighted in this study. The recommendations have a specific implication for various stakeholders and key role-players who are involved in the upbringing of adolescents while in secondary school. Therefore, based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

5.4.1 Department of Basic Education

- The provision of psychosocial support services needs to be made compulsory to all schools in the Johannesburg South, including the two selected schools.
- It must be mandated that all schools need to provide a space or room conducive for the procession of intervention to learners by school social workers.

5.4.2 Department of Social Development

- Referrals need to be made to the Department of Social Development and Department of Education for learners that are faced with psychosocial challenges that the school cannot mitigate.
- Given the current South African economic circumstances and the challenges to the permanent deployment of social worker services in school, it is recommended that the

number of school social workers per district be increased so that service made be provided across the different schools with minor barriers.

- Should the above not be feasible, the deployment of social auxiliary workers at all, if not most is recommended. These professionals will have to work with their school social workers to respond to challenges that schools are met with.

5.4.3 Secondary Schools

- Referrals need to be made to the Department of Social Development and Department of Education for learners that are faced with psychosocial challenges that the school cannot mitigate.
- Training needs to be provided to HOD teachers as they play a crucial role in supporting learners with psychosocial challenges. While it is understood that there may be a School-Based Support Team (SBST) to deal with such learner related cases, the HOD teacher seem to be stretching their role within the school and it is not clear who is meant to support these learners with their psychosocial challenges while school social workers are not there.
- Referrals need to be made to the Department of Social Development and Department of Education for learners that are faced with psychosocial challenges that the school cannot mitigate.
- The development of a peer support group that will be used as a space for learners to share some challenges that they are faced with both at school and home. This will be beneficial to learners as they would support each other. A member of the Learner Representative Council needs to be present in this group and, a teacher or a school social worker may be responsible to facilitate this.
- Additional/ extra classes must be provided to those learners that struggle to understand subjects such as Mathematics and Mathematical Literary as they are very important. Students require a good grade in those subjects for entrance to tertiary institutions and as Cockcroft (1986, p.1) puts it, “it would be very difficult – perhaps impossible – to live a normal life in very many parts of the world in the twentieth century without making use of mathematic of some kind.”

5.4.4 Future research

Following the findings of this study, it is recommended that future research should be conducted to explore the following areas:

- The consequences of bullying in South African public schools on the psychological and social functioning of adolescents.
- Are peer support groups in South African public schools effective?
- Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges in quantile four and five government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.
- How does bullying influence the resilience of learners who have been exposed to physical and emotional bullying?

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

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

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H20/06/16**
PROJECT TITLE	Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr G Khumalo
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	19 June 2020
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Permission letters required before data collection can commence Risk level: Low
EXPIRY DATE	28 July 2023
DATE 29 July 2020	**CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor E Pretorius

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ **Signature** **Date** ____/____/____

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Permission Letter (DSD)

GAUTENG PROVINCE
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Dr. Sello Mokoena
Tel: 082 331 0786
File no.: 02/08/20

Dear G Khumalo

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.

Your application to conduct research on **"Experiences of Grade 10-12 Learners on their Psychological Challenges: The case of two government schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng"** ***[University of Witwatersrand]*** has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found to be beneficial to the Department's vision and mission. The approval is subject to the Department's terms and conditions as stated on the GDSD application form.

You have permission to interview officials and beneficiaries within facilities regulated by the department, conduct observations and access relevant documents where necessary.

May I take this opportunity to wish you well on the journey you are about to embark on.

We look forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks

Dr. Sello Mokoena
Director: Research and Policy Coordination
Date: 17/05/2020

Appendix C: Permission Letter (GDE)

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	24 August 2020
Validity of Research Approval:	04 February 2020 – 30 September 2020 2019/571
Name of Researcher:	
Address of Researcher:	
Telephone Number:	
Email address:	863467@students.wits.ac.za
Research Topic:	.Experience of Grade10 -12 learners on their psychosocial challenges ;the case of two government schools in Johannesburg south ,Gauteng
Type of qualification	MA by Dissertation in Social Work
Number and type of schools:	2 Secondary School
District/s/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

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

24/08/2020

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher 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:

1. *Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. ***Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.***
4. ***The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.***
5. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
6. *A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
7. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
8. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
9. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
10. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
11. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
12. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
13. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
14. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
15. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
16. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 24/08/2020

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Appendix D: Permission Letter (School 1)

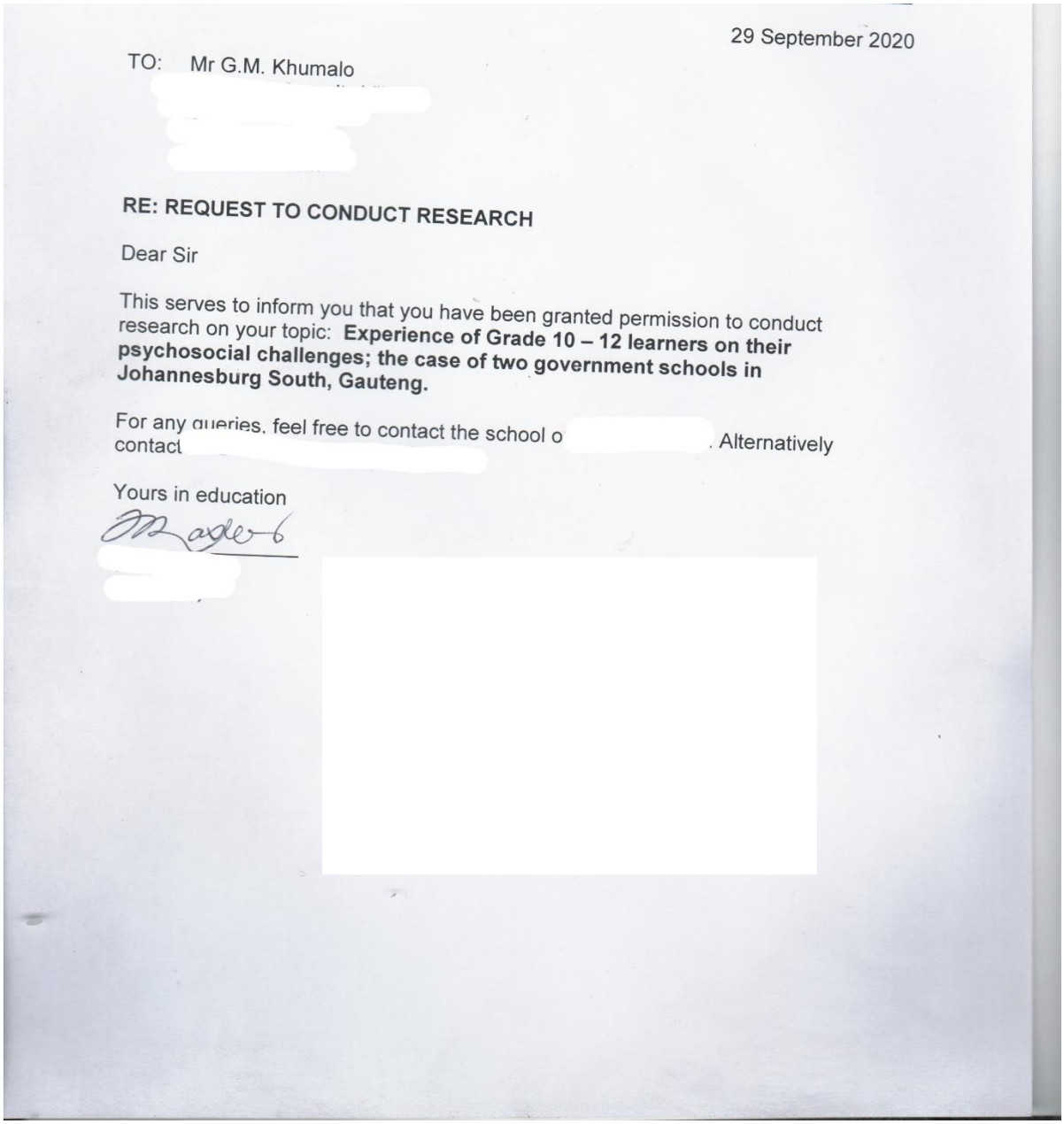
Date: 18 September 2020

Permission Grants: Research

Dear Gift Khumalo,

This letter serves to confirm that you've been granted permission to conduct your research study titled: ***Experiences of Grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges; the case of two government schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng,*** at our school, Secondary School.

Appendix E: Permission Letter (School 1)



29 September 2020

TO: Mr G.M. Khumalo

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Sir

This serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research on your topic: **Experience of Grade 10 – 12 learners on their psychosocial challenges; the case of two government schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng.**

For any queries, feel free to contact the school o . Alternatively contact

Yours in education

Appendix F: Participant Information Sheet (Learners)



Participant Information Sheet for Learners completing the open ended survey structured as a written interview

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Dear Learner,

My name is Gift Khumalo and I am a Masters by Research student in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I am doing a research study to complete my degree. A research study is a way to learn more about people.

Why am I doing this study? I am doing a research study to find out about the psychosocial challenges of secondary school learners attending government schools in the South of Johannesburg.

Why are you being asked to be in the study? I am inviting you to participate in the study because the study is about the challenges learners in grades 10-12 in government secondary schools might experience and I would like to understand that better.

What do you need to do during the study? You will be asked to complete an open-ended survey structures as a written interview with questions related to the psychosocial challenges that you as a learner might experience. You will be allowed to complete it anywhere you want (at school or at home).

Do you get anything for being in the study? There will not be any direct benefits for being in the study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate. The study will help me in understanding psychosocial challenges faced by learners in grades 10-12 and give you the opportunity to talk about the challenges to make people aware.

What if you no longer want to be in the study? You will be allowed to not continue completing the written interview if you don't want to anymore. Nobody will be angry or upset.

Should you tell my parents/ guardians about your participation? Yes, you should. They will be given an information sheet and consent form to sign giving permission for you to be in in the research study if you're under the age of 18 years.

School of Human and Community Development: Social Work
Private Bag 3, WITS, 2050, South Africa
T +27 11 717 4472 | **E** socialwork.SHCD@wits.a.c.za | www.wits.ac.za/shcd/social-work/social-work-as-a-profession/

What if the study makes you feel emotional and uncomfortable? You will be allowed to stop completing the written interview and let me know about it. If you want to talk to a social worker or counsellor about it, you may call contact them on the following numbers - social worker: Abia Lekitlane (0662 913 224); counsellors - Lifeline Johannesburg (065 989 9238 – WhatsApp) and South African Depression and Anxiety Group (076 882 2775 – WhatsApp). They will be able to support you through the phone or WhatsApp.

What happens after the study? When I am finished with the study, I will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or which school you go to.

What if you have questions? If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below.

What if you have concerns about the research?: If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Gift Khumalo

Researcher: Gift Khumalo

giftmkhumalo@gmail.com 081 770 9447

Supervisor: Professor Edmarie Pretorius

Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za 011 717 4476

Appendix G: Participant Information Sheet (Parents/ Guardians)

Participant Information Sheet for Parents/Guardians

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

My name is Gift Khumalo and I am a Masters by Research student in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am exploring the psychosocial challenges of secondary school learners attending government schools in the South of Johannesburg. This research project aims to explore the experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges in two Johannesburg government schools.

As part of this project, I would like to invite your child to take part in completing a written interview. Your child will be requested to complete a written interview with questions related to the psychosocial challenges that they as a learner might experience. Your child will be allowed to complete the written interview either at school or at home.

There will not be any direct benefits for participating in the study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties if they do not choose to participate, or if they withdraw from the study. They may withdraw from the study at any time or not answer any question if they do not want to. The written interview completion will be completely confidential and anonymous as they will not be asked for their name or any other identifying information. The information they share in the written interview will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. If they experience any distress or discomfort, they will be allowed to stop completing the written interview. Should they need some support or counselling services after completing the written interview, they may contact the social worker or the counsellors on the following numbers – DSD social worker: Abia Lekitlane (066 291 3224); counsellors - Lifeline Johannesburg (065 989 9238 – WhatsApp) and South African Depression and Anxiety Group (076 882 2775 – WhatsApp).

The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password protected computer for two years following any publications or six years if no publications emanate from the study. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. This research project will be written up as a dissertation which will be available online through the university library website. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za..

Yours sincerely,
Gift Khumalo

Researcher: Gift Khumalo
giftmkhumalo@gmail.com 081 770 9447

Supervisor: Associate Professor Edmarie Pretorius
Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za 011 717 4476

Appendix H: Consent Form (Parents/ Guardians)

Consent Form for Parents/Guardians

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Name of researcher: Gift Khumalo

I, …….., agree that my child can participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my child's participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his dissertation	YES	NO
I agree that the information provide by my child may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained	YES	NO

Participant's Details:

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of parent/guardian)

…… (Date)

Appendix I: Assent Form (Learners)

Assent Form for learners completing the open-ended survey structured a written interview

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Name of researcher: Gift Khumalo

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his report	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

Participant's Details:

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of participant)

…… (Date)

Appendix J: Consent Form (Learners)

Consent Form for learners 18 years and older completing the open-ended survey structured a written interview

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Name of researcher: Gift Khumalo

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his report	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

Participant's Details:

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of participant)

…… (Date)

Appendix K: Open-ended survey structured as a written interviews (Learners)

Open-ended survey structured as written interview for Learners

1. Are you a male or female? Circle one
2. How old are you?
3. What grade are you in?
4. What kind of things at home and at school make you happy? Explain.
5. What kind of things at home and at school are upsetting for you? Explain.
6. What are some of the challenges you are experiencing at home?
7. Why do you think you are experiencing these challenges at home? Explain.
8. How do you think these challenges at home are affecting your wellbeing?
9. Who do you talk to when you are experiencing these challenges at home? Why do you talk to this specific person(s)?
10. If you could change any two things in your home environment, what would it be and why would you change them?
11. What are some of the challenges you are experiencing at school?
12. Why do you think you are experiencing these challenges at school? Explain.
13. How do you think these challenges at school are affecting your wellbeing?
14. Who do you talk to when you are experience these challenges at school? Why do you talk to this particular person(s)?
15. If you could change any two things in your school environment, what would it be and why would you change it?
16. When you are experiencing challenges at school, what kind of support do you receive at school to help you with the challenges? Explain.
17. Do you think the school is doing enough to support you with your problems? Explain.
18. If you were the principal of the school, what would you have done differently to support learners at the school? Explain.

Appendix L: Participant Information Sheet (Teachers)

Participant Information Sheet for Teachers

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Dear Sir/ Madam,

My name is Gift Khumalo and I am a Masters by Research student in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am exploring the psychosocial challenges of secondary school learners attending government schools in the South of Johannesburg. This research project aims to explore the experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges in two Johannesburg government schools.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a face-to-face interview as you have insight into what happens in the lives of the learners and you observe them daily during school hours. This activity will involve being interviewed where I will ask questions related to the psychosocial challenges that learners might experience. The interview is likely to take about 45-60 minutes and will take place after school in a space that will be easily accessible. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device.

There will not be any direct benefits for participating in the study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate, or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any other identifying information. The information you share with me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final dissertation. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or continue with it another time. Should you need some support or counselling services following the interview, you made contact the social worker or the counsellor on the following numbers - social worker: Abia Lekitlane (0662 913 224); counsellors - Lifeline Johannesburg (065 989 9238 – WhatsApp) and South African Depression and Anxiety Group (076 882 2775 – WhatsApp).

The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password protected computer for two years following any publications or six years if no publications emanate from the study. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. This research project will be written up as a dissertation which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this dissertation, I will be happy to send it to you upon your request. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,
Gift Khumalo

Researcher: Gift Khumalo
giftmkhumalo@gmail.com 081 770 9447

Supervisor: Associate Professor Edmarie Pretorius,
Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za 011 717 4476

Appendix M: Consent Form (Teachers)

Consent Form for the Teacher

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Name of researcher: Gift Khumalo

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his dissertation	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

Participant's Details:

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of participant)

…… (Date)

Appendix N: Interview Guide (Teachers)

Semi structured Interview Guide for Teachers

1. How long have you been teaching at this particular school?
2. How long have you been a Grade HOD for this particular grade?
3. As a Grade HOD, what are some of your roles in the school and in the specific grade?
4. What do you think are the four most prominent psychosocial challenges that learners in this particular school are facing?
5. What do you think are the root causes of those challenges?
6. What are indicators to you that learners are experiencing psychosocial challenges?
7. In which ways do you think psychosocial challenges affect learners the most?
8. Who in your view is responsible to attend to the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners?
9. What are the psychosocial support services available to learners at the school?
10. How do you perceive the role of the school social worker at this school?
11. Who in your view is responsible to render academic support services to learners at the school?
12. What additional academic support services are available to learners at the school?
13. As a Grade HOD, what role are you expected to play in the learners' lives who experience psychosocial challenges?
14. How do you, not as the Grade HOD, but as a person deal with situations where learners confide in you about their challenges?
15. What barriers are you experiencing when trying to assist learners who are experiencing psychosocial challenges?
16. If you had a magic wand, what are the four main challenges in society you would change to limit the psychosocial challenges learners are experiencing?

Appendix O: Participant Information Sheet (Social Workers)

Participant Information Sheet for Social Workers

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Dear Sir/ Madam,

My name is Gift Khumalo and I am a Masters by Research student in Social Work at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I have to undertake a research project, and I am exploring the psychosocial challenges of secondary school learners attending government schools in the South of Johannesburg. This research project aims to explore the experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges in two Johannesburg government schools.

As part of this project, I would like to invite you to take part in a face-to-face interview as you render support services to the schools and its learners. This activity will involve being interviewed where I will ask questions related to the psychosocial challenges that learners might experience. The interview is likely to take about 45-60 minutes and will take place in an area where you feel comfortable. With your permission, I would also like to audio record the interview using a digital device.

There will not be any direct benefits for participating in the study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties if you do not choose to participate, or if you withdraw from the study. You may withdraw from the study at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The interview will be completely confidential and anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any other identifying information. The information you share with me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation in my final dissertation. If you experience any distress or discomfort, we will stop the interview or continue with it another time.

The data collected from this research project will be stored in a password protected computer for two years following any publications or six years if no publications emanate from the study.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. This research project will be written up as a dissertation which will be available online through the university library website.

If you wish to receive a summary of this dissertation, I will be happy to send it to you upon your request. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,
Gift Khumalo

Researcher: Gift Khumalo,
giftmkhumalo@gmail.com 081 770 9447

Supervisor: Associate Professor Edmarie Pretorius,
Edmarie.Pretorius@wits.ac.za 011 717 4476

Appendix P: Consent Form (Social Workers)

Consent Form for School Social Worker

Title of project: *Experiences of grade 10-12 learners on their psychosocial challenges: the case of two government schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng.*

Name of researcher: Gift Khumalo

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his dissertation	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained.	YES	NO

Participant's Details:

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of participant)

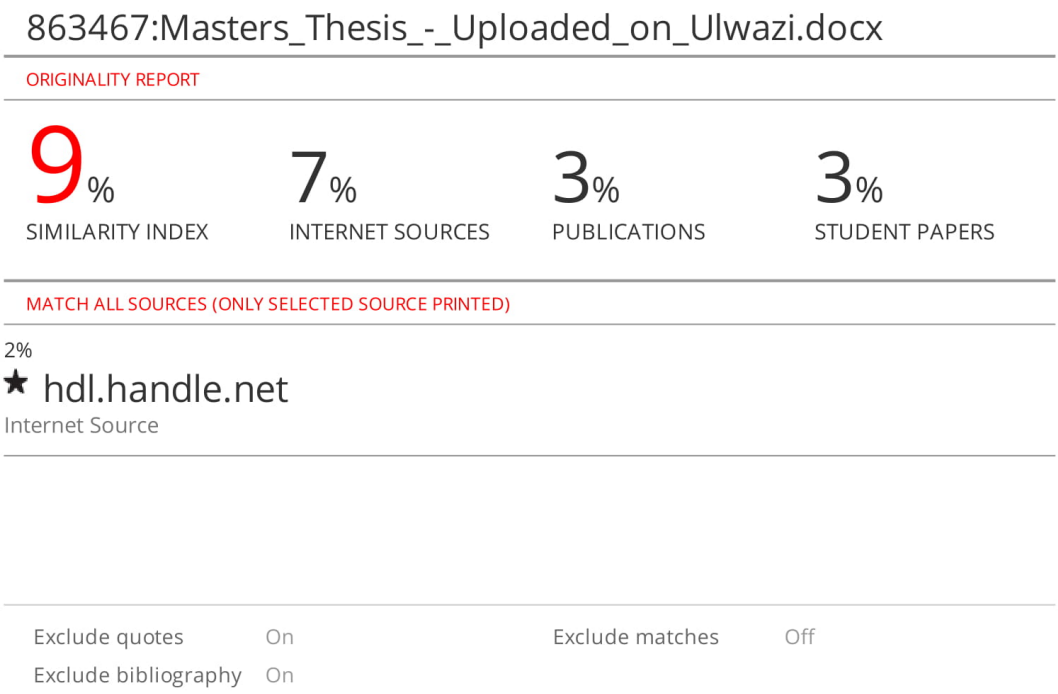
…… (Date)

Appendix Q: Interview Guide (Social Workers)

Semi structured Interview Guide for Social Workers

1. What do you think are the four most prominent psychosocial challenges that learners in this particular school are facing?
2. What do you think are the root causes of those challenges?
3. What are indications to you that learners are experiencing psychosocial challenges?
4. In which ways do you think psychosocial challenges affect learners the most?
5. Who in your view is responsible to attend to the psychosocial challenges experienced by learners at the school?
6. Share with me the kind of support you offer learners at the school?
7. What are the psychosocial support services available to learners at the school?
8. What other support services do you think would assist in effectively assisting learners with their psychosocial challenges? (External or internal support services needed).
9. Who in your view is responsible to render academic support services to learners at the school?
10. What additional academic support services are available to learners at the school?
11. As a school social worker, what role are you expected to play in the learners' lives who experience psychosocial challenges?
12. What barriers are you experiencing when trying to assist learners who are experiencing psychosocial challenges?
13. If you had a magic wand, what are the four main challenges in society you would change to limit the psychosocial challenges learners are experiencing?

Appendix R: Turn-it In Report



863467:Masters_Thesis_-_Uploaded_on_Ulwazi.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

9%	7%	3%	3%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

MATCH ALL SOURCES (ONLY SELECTED SOURCE PRINTED)

2%

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Internet Source

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Exclude bibliography	On		