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Experiences of grade eight learners in transitioning from primary to secondary school settings: A case of learners at a secondary school in Soweto

A report 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 partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree Master of Arts in the field of Social Development

by

Aphelele Jantjies

March 2024

DECLARATION

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

School of Human and Community Development

SENATE PLAGIARISM POLICY

I Aphelele Jantjies (2282262) am a student registered for Master of Arts in Social Development in the year 2023, with ethics clearance number H23/09/15. I hereby declare the following:

I am aware that plagiarism (the use of someone else's work without their permission and/or without acknowledging the original source) is wrong.

I confirm that ALL the work submitted for assessment for the above course is my own unaided work except where I have explicitly indicated otherwise.

I have followed the required conventions in referencing the thoughts and ideas of others.

I understand that the University of the Witwatersrand may take disciplinary action against me if there is a belief that this is not my own unaided work or that I have failed to acknowledge the source of the ideas or words in my writing.

Signature:  Date: 18 March 2024

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ABSTRACT

For learners, transitioning from primary to secondary school is an important turning point that affects their academic performance as well as their social and emotional development. This stage is marked by a transition towards more difficult subjects, more independence, and more accountability. This qualitative research explores the experiences of Grade eight learners at a Soweto secondary school as they move from primary to secondary school. Fifteen eighth grade learners were chosen for the study using a convenience selection technique, and four of the learners took part in the pretesting of the research instrument. Data was gathered through individual interviews utilizing a structured interview guide; recurrent themes were found using thematic data analysis.

The findings show that learners had substantial personal growth throughout this period, highlighting the need of recognizing and encouraging learners' psychological development. The study also emphasizes how important it is for learners to receive help throughout this transition, especially emotional and social support as they deal with the difficulties of adjusting to a new academic setting. Additionally, the study shows that most learners struggle with academic adjustment, with many finding it difficult to match the increased demands of secondary school. Social workers can be extremely helpful in managing academic challenges, assisting with emotional and mental health needs, directing the building of networks and connections, and promoting good identity formation and personal development. The school can play its role by establishing a thorough introduction program for eighth-grade learners that includes briefings with educators and school tours.

Additionally, learners can get mentoring, specialized support networks, and vital resources from social development programs. According to the findings, social workers, schools, parents and guardians as well as social development organizations must work together to serve the various requirements of eighth graders at this crucial time.

Key words: Adaptation, learners, primary school, secondary school, transitioning.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The transition from primary to secondary school marks an important milestone in an individual's academic career. As stated by Jensen et al. (2018), life transitions are a frequent experience for everyone. The transition from primary to secondary school is an important stage in a learner's educational career since it involves intellectual and physical development. However, some young adolescent's educational participation may drop throughout this transition (Hung, 2014).

This chapter is going to focus on the definition of transitioning from primary to secondary school according to different authors, the problem statement and rationale, the aim and objectives of the study, the research questions as well as the key concepts of the study.

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, a person's environment, which is made up of layered systems that extend from the immediate microsystem to the larger macrosystem has a complicated interaction that affects how an individual grows (Маројевић,2017). The theory highlights the significance of reciprocated interactions between an individual and their immediate surroundings, known as proximal processes, as the main forces behind development (Маројевић,2017). An ecological transition, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), is a shift in an individual's position within the environment caused by a change in role or location.

This theory points out the necessity of studying individuals within their ecological surroundings, noting that complex interconnections between individuals and their environments impact development on several levels. The framework developed by Bronfenbrenner has been extensively influential in several sectors, including psychology, education, and social work, and provides a complete framework for understanding and encouraging positive interpersonal development.

As stated by Bronfenbrenner (1979), roles may impact a person's behaviour, ideas, and emotions. Adolescent development includes role shifts, such as the move from primary to secondary school. Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework puts the individual at the centre of interrelated systems that range from proximal to distal. Learners engage with a variety of people in the school setting, including parents, teachers, and peers.

When exploring the experiences of grade eight learners transitioning from primary to secondary school, ecological theory can give a framework for understanding the numerous elements influencing this transition. For example, the microsystem might incorporate learners' interactions and experiences with teachers, classmates, and family members during the transition period. The mesosystem may include the links between primary and secondary schools, as well as how these relationships affect the experiences of learners. The exosystem might comprise the education system's rules and practices that affect the transition process, whereas the macrosystem could include social norms and values surrounding education.

The secondary school setting differs greatly from the primary school setting in numerous significant ways. To begin, secondary school learners are more prone to taking illegal drugs, with research demonstrating that alcohol is widely misused by learners at the secondary school level (Zemba,2022).

Secondary school learners frequently enjoy greater freedom and independence. They may find it simpler to partake in dangerous activities without adult supervision as a result (Zemba,2022).

Peer pressure, low self-esteem, and the availability of illicit drugs are common and unplanned pregnancies are also occurring more frequently in secondary school settings.

Bullying may cause bad peer relationships, health issues, and violence in both offenders and victims (Marziya et al.,2023). The secondary school setting can be more difficult, with some institutions unable to provide a supportive and stimulating learning environment for all children resulting in certain learners quitting during their middle secondary years (Marziya et al.,2023).

Overall, the secondary school setting has distinct problems that demand a more complete and coordinated effort to handle concerns such as substance abuse, bullying, and unplanned pregnancies which can have an impact in the transitioning process.

Statement of the problem and the rationale of the study

This study explores the experiences of grade eight learners transitioning from primary to secondary School in Soweto. In Soweto, the transition from primary to secondary school is complicated and may have a significant influence on learners' lives. Ansell (2004) and Pereira et al. (2007) both emphasize the difficulties and disruptions that may occur during this transition, such as changes in social interactions and academic emphasis. Hallinan and

Hallinan (1992) underline the relevance of preparation programs and support networks in assisting learners with this transition.

Naicker and Mistry (2013) argue that the possibility for distributive leadership in Soweto's primary institutions is hampered by authoritarian leadership styles and hierarchical structures, which may exacerbate the transition process.

Grade eight learners in Soweto may face challenging and varied transitions to secondary school. These learners are confronted with several new task demands, such as changing classes and classmates for each period or subject, adjusting to diverse teaching styles and academic standards, and meeting the expectations of multiple teachers (Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019). This transition can be especially difficult for Soweto grade eight learners who come from primary schools that give minimal feedback on their academic achievement (Weiss & Bearman,2007).

During this transition time, grade eight learners may feel anxious and frustrated as they negotiate the new secondary school environment and higher academic demands (van Rens et al., 2018). This phase of transformation can have long-term consequences for their self-esteem, attitudes, and overall well-being. Given that transitioning to secondary school can have a substantial influence on the academic and social development of grade eight learners in Soweto, understanding these experiences is critical for developing targeted interventions and support (van Rens et al., 2018). This insight can assist educators and legislators guarantee that Soweto grade eight learners have a seamless and successful transition as they continue their education.

Furthermore, cultural, and socioeconomic background, access to resources and support systems, school infrastructure and curriculum, teacher-learner relationships, and peer interactions can all have an impact on Soweto grade eight learners' transitions to secondary school (Mupira & Ramnarain, 2018). In terms of backdrop and relevance, Soweto's historical prominence in South Africa's battle against apartheid produces a one-of-a-kind educational setting. While there has been progress in extending access to education, inequities in resource allocation, infrastructure, and learning outcomes persist (Heffernan, 2019). This study sought to add to a better understanding of how these contextual elements, together with larger socioeconomic realities, impact Soweto learners' experiences as they transition to secondary school.

This study fills a gap in the available knowledge. While there has been substantial study on school transitions, previous research sometimes misses the particular obstacles and contextual complexities encountered by learners in vulnerable communities such as Soweto. This study adds to our understanding of how socioeconomic variables, cultural transformations, and educational frameworks interact to shape their experiences throughout this transition.

Secondly, the purpose of this research is to give useful insights on educational processes.

This study may assist in creating culturally relevant and comprehensive support systems in Soweto's secondary schools. This might include changing ways of teaching, improving teacher-learner interactions, and building targeted academic and social support networks.

Transitioning to secondary school can cause major stress, anxiety, and academic difficulties for learners (Rice et al.,2021). This research can help to improve learners' emotional well-being and academic progress by identifying possible difficulties and coping mechanisms.

The knowledge will help to promote social fairness. Educational inequality is a persistent problem in South Africa. This research sheds light on this key moment of transition by evaluating the experiences of grade eight learners in Soweto, providing useful insights that may guide interventions, support networks, and educational practices targeted at supporting their academic achievement and general well-being.

Research question

How do learners in grade eight experience the transitioning from primary school to secondary school?

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To explore grade eight learners' experience in transitioning from primary school to secondary school.

Objectives

- To explore the learners' emotional experiences of moving from primary to secondary school

- To explore grade eight learners' academical adjustment during the transition from primary school to secondary school.

- To ascertain any challenges that learners experience during their transition from primary school to secondary school.

- To identify potential support mechanisms that assist grade eight learners cope with the transition from primary school to secondary school.

Definition of key concepts

Adaptation- Individuals must adapt in order to cope and adjust to their surroundings or conditions. Vygotsky (1978) describes adaptation as the reorganization and change of cognitive processes in response to new information or demands, emphasizing the importance of social ties and scaffolding in helping people adjust to unfamiliar settings.

The notion of adaptability has several meanings in various domains. In human behaviour, adaptability is defined as the ability to adjust and integrate into a variety of situations (Vygotsky,1978).

In this study, The researcher used the term adaptation to define the process by which learners adjust to their secondary school environment.

Learners: The concept of learners encompasses various dimensions, including physical, mental, and moral aspects, along with the need for ethical guidelines (Mirnawati, 2022). Being a learner entails possessing self-worth and the ability to adapt (Crick, 2005). In complex organizational contexts, the notion of "learnership" entails distributing the responsibility for learning and leadership throughout the organization (Cooksey, 2003). Learners are also perceived as knowledge workers who continuously modify their understanding through the utilization of cognitive tools (Broberg, 1999).

The Department of Education classifies learners into different groups based on various educational systems: foundation phase learners, comprising learners in grades 1 to 3; intermediate phase learners, comprising learners in grades 4 to 6; senior phase learners, comprising learners in grades 7 to 9; and further education and training learners, comprising learners in grades 10 to 12 (Education, 2013).

The participants in this study are first-time grade eight learners who attend school with the intention of acquiring knowledge and skills.

Primary school- According to the findings of Bru et al. (2010), primary school is characterized by close educator-learner interactions and a focus on essential skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics.

Primary school is the foundation of most societies develop, as it fosters attitudes and ways to learning. It instils in the individual the ability to read, write, and communicate, therefore helping to eradicate illiteracy (Kusimo et al.,2019).

Regarding basic education, Vygotsky (1978) underscored the importance of social interaction and cultural influences. According to Vygotsky, primary schools should strive to create a supportive social environment that encourages collaborative learning and scaffolding. He was of the belief that encounters with more knowledgeable individuals had a positive impact on a child's development.

Incorporating Vygotsky's framework into this study sheds light on how social interactions, cultural influences, and peer and educator support change the experiences of eighth-grade learners during this important transitioning phase. Recognizing the importance of social and cultural aspects in the transition process allows educators and policymakers to better help learners as they negotiate the obstacles and possibilities of going from primary to secondary school.

Secondary school: According to Howe (2011), the focus of the secondary school curriculum is on various subjects, with an emphasis on fostering learners' responsibility for their own learning.

The concept of secondary school is multifaceted, encompassing both the physical and verbal dimensions of the educational environment (Hayes & Vivian, 2007). Throughout history, secondary schools have adapted to meet the evolving needs of society, with a particular emphasis on the education of adolescents (Villaverde, 2003). Despite being frequently used in educational literature, the term "secondary education" has caused confusion among some educators (Robinson & Kysh, 1896).

According to Hopkins (2007), secondary school is an institution that provides education to individuals aged 11 to 18 years. It serves as a transitional stage between primary and tertiary education, offering a range of academic and vocational subjects to cater to the diverse needs and interests of learners.

The participants of this study are aged 12-13 years old within the secondary school setting, aligning with the transitional stage within the age range as stated by Hopkins (2007).

Transitioning- Transition refers to the process through which a learner advances from one grade level to the succeeding one (Mizelle & Irvin, 2000). According to Wormeli (2013), transitioning in the educational setting is characterized as the period during which learners shift from one grade level or school to another. This encompasses alterations in curriculum, instructional approaches, and social interactions.

In the present context, the notion of transition was employed to describe the process experienced by grade eight learners as they move from primary to secondary school and encounter these changes.

This report unfolds in the following chapters:

Chapter 1 Focusses on the introduction

Chapter 2 Discusses theoretical framework underpinning the study and presents and describes literature, outlining existing research on school transitions, particularly in marginalized contexts like Soweto.

Chapter 3 Details the research methodology, including participant selection, interview procedures, and data analysis techniques.

Chapter 4 Presents the key findings of the study, organized around themes identified through the thematic analysis of interview data and discusses the findings in the context of existing literature and the specific realities of Soweto, drawing out implications for educators, policymakers, and communities.

Chapter 5 Concludes the report with a summary of key findings, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Through an in-depth exploration of the personal experiences of learners in Soweto, this study seeks to illuminate the intricacies of their transition and provide significant insights into cultivating nurturing environments that enhance both their academic achievements and overall well-being.

In conclusion, an extensive overview of the primary to secondary school transition was given in Chapter One. It has defined key concepts, detailed the aim and objectives, shown

the research question for the study, and explored numerous perspectives from different writers. It has also established the problem statement and rationale for the study. The study's basis is laid in this chapter, which also makes it evident how critical it is to address the problems and difficulties learners face during this time of transition.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE STUDY

Theoretical framework underpinning the study.

In chapter two, the Ecological Systems Theory put out by Bronfenbrenner will be examined in detail as the theoretical framework for this study. According to this idea, the complex interactions between a variety of environmental influences occurring in multiple systems have an impact on an individual's development. A comprehensive literature review of the body of research on the study will also be provided in this chapter, along with an analysis of pertinent theories and studies that have been carried out in the area.

Research needs theoretical frameworks since they serve as a guide for the study's various components and as an approach for the research process (Cai et al., 2019). They lay the groundwork for the research questions, literature evaluation, and analysis in addition to supporting the goals, procedures, and design of the study (Cai et al., 2019). The researcher's ontological and epistemological stances frequently impact the choice of theoretical framework (Heale & Noble, 2019). An effective theoretical framework can influence the methods for data collection and analysis as well as the selection of a suitable research approach (Oppong, 2013). Thus, understanding and utilizing a theoretical framework in research is essential (Heale & Noble, 2019).

Majeed et al. (2023) state that conceptual frameworks are created combining ideas and concepts from different theories or studies, whereas theoretical frameworks are built based on one or more theories to direct a study. These frameworks are essential to research because they provide credibility and direct results for the study (Adom et al., 2018). They also have a major role in influencing the study's design, methodology, and reporting as well as in demonstrating the importance of a research question (Cai et al., 2019). Wilensky (1987) highlights the significance of possessing a comprehensive comprehension of the various facets of meaning in relation to language theories.

This research on the experiences of grade eight learners during their transition from primary to secondary school in a Soweto context was informed by the following theoretical framework, which encompasses the various aspects of this intricate process.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The ecological systems theory developed by Bronfenbrenner, also known as bioecological systems theory, emphasizes the interaction between a child's environment, which consists

of several layers, and their biology (Darling, 2007). The micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems are these layers; they are related to each other and can affect each other. According to Darling (2007), the theory emphasizes the active role that the developing individual plays and the importance of taking the larger environment into account in order to understand human development. Many academic fields, including psychology, pedagogy, and social work, have adopted it extensively (Crawford, 2020).

According to this theory, environments that are nested, from the individual level to the societal level, have an impact on development. Thus, this study looked at how the macrosystem (Soweto's socioeconomic realities) and exosystem (government policies, educational structures) interact with the learner's microsystem (family, peers, and teachers) and mesosystem (interactions between these microsystems) to shape their experiences during the transition.

An ecological view on the transition to secondary school, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979), recognizes that this process is complex and unique, involving interactions across multiple systems, including the individual learner, their family, school, community, and cultural background.

According to Oyserman and Destin (2010), learners may face unique challenges with social interactions, the formation of their personal identities, and academic expectations. Family factors that might make these problems worse include parental support, family structure, and financial standing (Crosnoe & Johnson, 2011).

Learners may have difficulties at the school level when it comes to changing to new routines and expectations, adjusting to new social and cultural norms, and managing interactions with classmates and instructors (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Eccles and Roeser (2011) state that these difficulties may be influenced by educational variables such as resource availability, school culture, and teacher quality.

To address these issues, interventions should take an ecological perspective that considers all relevant systems and recognizes the complex relationships between them. Interventions should focus on creating a positive school and home environment, building individual resilience, and coping skills, addressing societal and cultural norms that may affect the transition process, and providing appropriate academic and social support services (Benner, 2011).

A person's mesosystem is a representation of how different microsystems in their life are interconnected. When learners in grade eight are making their transition to secondary school, the mesosystem dynamics may involve school-family-community organization cooperation and communication to help the learners adjust (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).The report's findings may indicate that bolstering the mesosystem's connections, for example, by boosting family-school partnerships, incorporating community resources, and facilitating communication between primary and secondary schools can have a favourable effect on learners' transition experiences.

Exosystem impacts are those from outside settings that have an indirect effect on people. Social institutions, cultural values, and policies may be examples of this (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the macrosystem consists of the larger cultural and societal setting in which a person lives. Regarding education, adolescence, and the function of schools in society, the macrosystem shapes the prevalent attitudes, beliefs, and values during the transition from elementary to secondary school. It is possible to get insight into how these larger factors impact grade eight learners' transition to secondary school by comprehending the cultural and societal norms that shape their experiences. This knowledge might result in the creation of interventions and support plans that are sensitive to cultural differences.

A successful transition necessitates collaboration between systems such as primary and secondary schools, diagnostic processes to measure student competency, knowledge of themes or methods learnt in primary school, and suitable evaluation methods. The transition from early to primary education has an influence on learners' social skills development. Transitions are required in both personal and school settings.

Individual factors, such as learner characteristics, might also intensify or mitigate the consequences of the school transition. Examining unadjusted results and using multivariate analysis can indicate the degree of change learners encounter as they transition from primary to secondary school dependent on their educational background. Adaptation is critical for eighth-grade learners to promote optimal growth in the academic, social, and personal areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review entails a comprehensive investigation of existing academic literature within a specific field, serving as a foundational framework for further research (Serra, 2015; Fang, 2021). Its principal objective is to situate a study within the current body of knowledge, identifying gaps and areas that require future exploration (Parajuli, 2020). The review should not merely provide a summary of existing work, but also engage in critical evaluation and synthesis, presenting a cohesive narrative (Fang, 2021). In the realm of social sciences, it plays a fundamental role in guiding researchers to identify the research problem and establish the significance and validity of their work (Parajuli, 2020).

The transition from primary to secondary school represents a significant milestone in the educational journey of every learner. This transition presents specific complexities for grade eight learners in Soweto, South Africa, due to the unique socio-economic challenges and cultural adjustments they encounter. The purpose of this literature review is to examine previous research on learners' experiences during this transition, exploring key themes and findings that are pertinent to my study.

This review concentrates on the following broad topics, Definitions of transitions from primary school to secondary school, Historical perspectives on the transition process, Factors influencing the experiences of grade eight learners during the transition, Existing gaps and areas for further research in the field, South African Education System, Challenges facing learners, Support systems of learners transitioning from primary to secondary school, Bullying experienced by grade eight learners in transitioning to secondary school as well as policies to better illuminate a successful transition.

Definition and significance of the transition from primary school to secondary school

Transitioning from primary to secondary school is a significant period of adjustment for young people, requiring them to adapt to new social and cognitive environments that frequently align with change in development (Hebron & Humphrey, 2014). This transition is one of the biggest since it involves a great deal of adjustments and structural, intellectual, and social challenges. According to Waters et al. (2014), these transitions usually entail moving from a smaller primary school to a much larger secondary school, getting used to having multiple subject teachers rather than just one, altering the expectations for behaviour and academic performance, and making new friends and older learners.

The effects of this change on learners' general wellbeing, social and emotional growth, and academic performance will be profound. Studies have shown that when there is not the expected increase and sometimes even a regression, this shift may result in a "dip" in academic success, especially in reading and numeracy (Jindal-Snape, 2016). A lack of curriculum coherence between schools, differences in pedagogical approaches, and differences in teacher expectations between the two settings are some of the factors that have been connected to this decline. These factors have also been connected to a decline in self-esteem and a lack of stage-environment fit (Jindal-Snape, 2016).

In addition, research indicates that a significant number of learners encounter a reduction in their psychological well-being throughout this time, which is connected to adjustments in learners' mental health throughout this transition. This includes experiencing increased levels of stress and anxiety, which makes sense considering all the adjustments and challenges they face (Waters et al, 2014).

Furthermore, the transition to secondary school is a crucial time for the growth of learners' social networks and relationships. Numerous learners may find it difficult to make new friends and adjust to a new social setting, which may have a detrimental effect on their sense of connection to and belonging at school (Ellerbrock et al., 2023).

Historical perspectives on the transition process

The complexity and diversity of transitions across disciplines and settings are a reflection of the numerous different conceptualizations of the transition process that have existed historically (Benner et al.,2017). The concept of transition encompasses a deeper, more intimate sense of human adaptation and change than just straightforward change. Transition and change are the two categories of change, according to Nortier (1995). Transition is an internal process that is experienced at the subjective or feeling level and is closely associated with how the person perceives the change's influence on their day-to-day life. Change is often perceived at a physical or environmental level and is created by events (Benner et al.,2017).

This distinction emphasizes the process of progressively letting go of old habits and reflecting on one's path to establishing a new reality, drawing focus to the psychological and emotional components of transitions (Jindal-Snape, 2018).

From this perspective, transitions are seen as particularly difficult as they are intricate processes that cannot be reduced to a single incident or encounter.

As a framework for understanding and supporting the changes that young people go through as they navigate the educational system, the concept of transition pedagogy has emerged in the educational setting (Ellerbrock et a,2023). The need of designing learning experiences that are attentive to learners' diverse needs is strongly emphasized by transition pedagogy, particularly during significant transitional periods like the first year of university (van Rens et al., 2018).

Moreover, the study of the historical context of transitions has been connected to the development of professional identities, as transitions are seen as crucial occurrences that impact the direction of professional practice and education (Jindal-Snape et al.,2019). Schlossberg's transition theory, for instance, provides a framework for understanding the stages of role transition and highlights the importance of orientation, learning new skills, and moving through periods of change (Anderson et al.,2011).

This perspective holds that transitions are dynamic processes that entail adaptation and learning and are crucial to one's ability to advance effectively.

Identity Formation

The lives of learners are greatly impacted by the change from primary to secondary school since it frequently brings about a major adjustment to their social and intellectual surroundings (Sulek et al.,2019). Studies indicate that this shift may significantly influence how a learner forms their identity as they adjust to new social situations and scholastic obstacles (Ungureanu et al., 2020).

An important idea that comes out of the literature is "swift identity," which is characterized as an early, uncontested, and well-defined identity that may serve as a cooperation accelerator when faced with integration imperatives and heterogeneity difficulties (Ungureanu et al., 2020). During the transition from primary to secondary school, this idea is especially pertinent since learners may need to swiftly adjust to new social and academic demands.

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes the importance of "identity work" while dealing with contradictory identities. learners may accept new identity demands without experiencing persistent identity conflict as a result to this continual process of identity

growth and integration, which can be especially important when moving from primary school to secondary school (Croft et al., 2015).

The development of a desired leader persona also plays a big role in the transition to secondary school. Social group leaders, like learners in a new school setting, must both uphold their own intended group identity and convey it to others in order to continue having influence (Croft et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the literature suggests that the transition to a new school environment can trigger individual identity conflict, as individuals may feel unable to sustain multiple identities. This can be a particularly challenging aspect of the primary to secondary school transition, as learners may need to navigate new social groups and expectations (Croft et al.,2015).

The literature on identity formation in the context of the primary to secondary school transition highlights the complex interplay between individual and group identities, the role of swift identity in accelerating collaboration, and the ongoing process of identity work in the face of conflicting identities. These findings can provide valuable insights for educators and parents as they support learners through this critical period of development.

Factors influencing the experiences of grade eight learners during the transition

A learner's educational path is significantly impacted by their transition from primary to secondary school, which is characterized by a number of problems and changes that may affect their experiences and ability to adjust (Jindal-Snape & Cantali,2019). The transition experiences of grade eight learners are significantly shaped by a number of factors:

School Connectedness: It is important to experience a sense of belonging and acceptance in the educational environment throughout this transition. Strong senses of belonging at school enable learners to cope better with academic, social, and structural changes that occur with transitioning, and they also reduce the likelihood that they will have mental health problems (Hebron & Humphrey, 2014).

Academic emotions: Many learners report a decrease in happy feelings and an increase in negative emotions as a result of the change, which can have a substantial influence on their emotional states. This emotional change may have an impact on their drive to study, their academic achievement, and their general well-being (Anderson et al.,2011).

Learning problems: Extra learning challenges may make the transition more challenging for learners with reading difficulties (RD) or math difficulties (MD). These challenges may result in increased unfavourable feelings about school and worse performance throughout the transition (Holopainen et al., 2017).

Peer Support: During a transition, learners' academic progress and well-being are significantly predicted by changes in their peers' support. According to Sainio (2021), learners who get more post-transition support from their peers are more likely to have a positive transition experience. This emphasizes the significance of solid peer connections and the development of new ones in the new school setting.

Teacher and School Support: Learners' academic progress and adjustment throughout the transition are greatly dependent upon their positive connections with teachers and their perceptions of a supportive school environment. The negative effects of the change can be lessened by making an effort to build a more loving and supportive school atmosphere (Coffey, 2013).

Existing gaps and areas for further research in the field

Studies have revealed a "dip" in learning outcomes during the transition, which has been linked to aspects like inconsistent curricula, altered approaches to learning, and changes in teacher expectations, in addition to probable reductions in self-worth and stage-environment fit (Galton et al, 1999). The transition offers chances for growth and development despite these obstacles, indicating a need for continued assistance from important people in the learners' life (Jindal-Snape, 2018).

Reviews of the literature have shown how little is known about the holistic experiences of learners during this transition. Most studies, instead of offering a full understanding of the process, focus on specific aspects of the transition or the immediate pre- and post-transition periods (Jindal-Snape et al.,2019). Moreover, there is a noticeable lack of positive discourse surrounding this transition; most of the literature, according to Jindal-Snape et al. (2019), emphasizes possible negative outcomes rather than acknowledging the positive anticipation and successful navigation of the transition by the majority of learners.

In light of these findings, future studies have to concentrate on creating a more thorough comprehension of the transition process and investigating the potential and problems it poses. This entails determining the factors that lead to easy transition experiences as well

as examining the effectiveness of various interventions and support systems in promoting an easy transition. To further understand how learners, parents, and educators view and manage this crucial time, more research into the conceptualizations and theorizations of transition is required (Snape & Jindal, 2018)

South African Education System

In the realm of South African education, there are several distinct systems. The first is South Africa's general education system, which is divided into three phases: the Foundation Phase (grades R-3), the Intermediate Phase (grades 4-6), and the Senior Phase (grades 7-9). The goal of this system is to provide learners with a comprehensive education, with a strong focus on reading, numeracy, and general knowledge (South African Schools Act, 1996).

There is also the Private Education System in South Africa, which includes a significant private education sector consisting of independent schools, private institutions, and universities. Unlike public schools, private schools have the flexibility to offer a variety of educational philosophies, curricula, and teaching methodologies.

Grade eight learners in South Africa encounter difficulties transitioning to secondary school owing to a variety of causes, including deficiencies in the education system, low quality education, and a lack of resources. These problems lead to significant dropout rates, with only around 45% of learners who begin school taking their final secondary school examination (VOA,2012). Teachers' lack of the subject knowledge, historical circumstances, racial and linguistic barriers, regional disparities, and socio-economic status are all contributing factors to these obstacles (Desai et al., 2024). Furthermore, the lack of quality teachers and resources in schools adds to the poor educational attainment levels in South Africa (Desai et al., 2024).

In South Africa, public schools are divided into quintiles, ranging from Quintile 1 (poorest) to Quintile 5 (least poor) (White & Van Dyk,2019). The quintile system defines government funding allocation, with Quintile 1 schools receiving the most per learner and Quintile 5 receiving the least. Schools in Quintiles 1-3 are "no-fee paying schools," whereas Quintiles 4-5 are "fee-paying schools" (Ogbonnaya & Awuah,2019).

The quintile ranking is intended to reduce socioeconomic differences and provide equal access to education. Despite funding differences, learners' academic success varies by

quintile, with poorer quintiles often underperforming academically (Ogbonnaya & Awuah,2019).

The method has been criticised for failing to totally eliminate educational disparities between socioeconomic classes. Parents and School Governing Bodies can challenge a school's quintile categorization if they feel it is wrong. Understanding the quintile system is critical for parents in advocating for their children's education and ensuring an equitable learning environment academically (Ogbonnaya & Awuah,2019). According to the Department of Basic Education (2022) Senaoane Secondary School is in the fourth quintile.

The role of school climate and culture in shaping learners' experiences

Many authors have emphasized the complicated and multidimensional role that school atmosphere plays in influencing the experiences of learners as they move from primary to secondary school. Wang and Degol (2016) emphasize that the academic, community, safety, and institutional contexts are all included in the multifaceted concept of school climate. This implies that the learners' total transition experience is significantly influenced by the calibre and nature of the institution as perceived by them.

The culture and environment of the school greatly influence how learners feel when they transition from primary to secondary school. Academic success is greatly influenced by the school atmosphere, which includes a variety of elements such as school safety, positive connections, engaged learning, and school reform initiatives (George et al., 2021).

Good peer connections, which are a component of the school climate, have been linked to academic success and can provide learners with social and emotional support, which further contributes to the environment in the classroom (George et al., 2021).

The learning environment of the school is influenced by the school's culture, which is formed by its institutional or organizational characteristics. The learning environment directly affects how learners learn, and school leadership may impact it through a variety of mediation processes (George et al., 2021).

It is critical to comprehend the effects of belonging for a broad spectrum of learners from various ethno-racial groups in the context of cities with varying racial compositions. Due to prejudice, learners who are socially positioned differently as a result of their race or

ethnicity frequently have diverse experiences with school climates and a sense of belonging (George et al., 2021).

A learner's journey from primary to secondary school is a momentous occasion in their lives, and the school's culture has a profound impact on how they perceive this change. Akos and Galassi's (2004) study found that teachers, parents, and learners all have different perspectives on their transition to secondary school, and that the school culture has a big influence on this transition. The authors stress how crucial it is to have a welcoming school culture to aid learners in transitioning to their surroundings for the first time (Akos & Galassi, 2004)

Moreover, the culture and environment of the school, which include supportive peer connections and strong school leadership, are critical factors that influence learners as they go from primary to secondary education. To help learners throughout this time of transition, it's critical to establish a supportive and inclusive school environment (George et al., 2021).

Additionally, van Rens et al. (2017) comprehensive literature review emphasizes the significance of support and engagement in the transition process. According to the authors, the school culture, which includes the behaviours and ways of thinking that are widespread in secondary schools, may have a good and negative influence on learners' well-being during this transition period.

Hanewald's (2013) research indicates that the transition to secondary education is a crucial time for learners as they adjust to new academic and social standards in addition to a wider learning environment. The author stresses that in order to assist learners in navigating these transitions, the school community must provide assistance.

Additionally, a study by Galton and McLellan (2018) explores the experiences of learners moving from primary to secondary school. The authors draw attention to the difficulties learners encounter, including the requirement for increased levels of independence and organization in addition to the social skills necessary to make new friends and fit in with the new peer group.

Lastly, a study conducted in 2010 by Bokhorst et al, highlights the need of social support for young people between the ages of 9 and 18 from their parents, friends, classmates, and educators. According to the authors, learners' experiences throughout the transition to

secondary school can be greatly impacted by a supportive school culture that fosters this kind of social support.

Overall, learners' experiences as they go from primary to secondary school are greatly influenced by the culture and environment of the school. In addition to child involvement and social support, a supportive school culture is essential in assisting learners in overcoming this difficult time. It is crucial to remember, though, that the culture of the school may affect the health of learners throughout this transition in ways that are beneficial as well as detrimental. As a result, it is crucial that schools provide a welcoming and encouraging environment that helps all learners make the transition smoothly.

Challenges facing learners

When a learners enter a secondary school, they may run into a number of social concerns such as violence, crime, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and trauma. Learners' entire school experience, mental health, and academic performance are all greatly impacted by these difficulties (Needham et al,.2004). A further serious problem in public schools is the socioeconomic performance gap, where learners from lower-income families suffer from a variety of challenges, including poverty, which impairs brain development and learning (Beasley& Haulmark,2021). Additionally detrimental to adolescents' academic performance and emotional health include teenage pregnancies, criminality, and violence.

Crime: Transitioning to secondary school unveils the potential for involvement in criminal activities and exposure to violence, both within and outside the school setting. Peer pressure and the threat of violence from peers or external sources can induce feelings of anxiety and distress among learners (Frederique,2020).

The pivotal role of schools in a learner's education and sociocultural development cannot be underestimated. It is crucial that educational institutions establish a secure and nurturing environment that fosters genuine growth and learning (Schoeman, 2010). Unfortunately, a significant number of young individuals are raised in distressed and perilous surroundings, which strongly affects their lives (Benjamin, 2011). This issue is not limited to South Africa alone, as children worldwide face a deteriorating family structure, rising unemployment rates, substance abuse, and pervasive violence (Schoeman, 2010). The prevalence of violence within schools is consistently highlighted in South African media. According to data, around 71% of schools reported at least one episode of violent crime in 2017-2018 (Frederique,2020).

The transition from primary to secondary education in South Africa also presents a range of challenges, including academic difficulties, socioeconomic barriers, and a lack of support services (Ajani & Gamede, 2020). These challenges are further exacerbated by a flawed education system, inadequate teaching personnel, and a lack of accountability (Mouton & Louw, 2012). The transition process itself brings its own complexities, such as high rates of repetition and dropout, emphasizing the need for improved assessment and selection methods (Africa, 2008). Furthermore, educators face a unique set of obstacles in meeting the diverse needs of learners, including insufficient training and resources, large class sizes, and unruly learners (De Jager, 2017).

Poverty: Poverty, particularly, is a socioeconomic predicament that profoundly affects numerous children, specifically those beginning secondary school. Learners from low-income backgrounds may face a plethora of academic hurdles, including limited access to educational resources, inadequate nutrition, and a lack of parental support. Poverty also amplifies stress levels, thereby generating negative effects on children's mental health and ability to concentrate in an educational setting (Currie & Spatz Widom, 2010).

Teenage Pregnancy: The transition from primary to secondary school is greatly impacted by teenage pregnancy in South Africa, which has an effect on learners, schools, families, communities, and society at large (Jonas et al, 2016). According to studies, almost 30% of South African adolescents have been pregnant, and among learners enrolled in school, the likelihood of an unintended pregnancy is very high. In 2014, the Department of Basic Education documented 20,000 pregnant learners; primary school females were also involved in this issue (Nkosi & Pretorius,2019). Teenagers who are pregnant confront health, socioeconomic, and educational obstacles, which highlights the need for focused interventions, particularly in areas like KwaZulu Natal, the Eastern Cape, and Limpopo. Teenage pregnancy is still a major problem in spite of attempts to address it, necessitating cooperation amongst several stakeholders in order to find practical solutions (Nkosi & Pretorius,2019). Young mothers, in particular, struggle to balance their educational pursuits with the responsibilities associated with parenthood, leading to lower rates of secondary school completion and limited future prospects (Panday et al., 2009).

Workload: Numerous studies have emphasized the increased workload, faster pace, and more complex subject matter that learners encounter in secondary school. These factors

often contribute to feelings of overwhelm and reduced confidence (Aitchison & Mabotse, 2018; Boaler, 2020).

Studies have also indicated that a thoughtfully developed transitional support system can yield substantial advantages to learners throughout this crucial phase. In order to meet the many requirements of learners, Johnson (2017) contends that these kinds of support networks have to include intellectual, social, and emotional components. To assist learners in navigating the additional academic requirements, academic support may take the form of academic counselling, mentorship programs, and orientation workshops.

Difficulties with new teaching styles: Learners who are accustomed to the personalized and interactive teaching methods commonly used in primary school may face challenges when they transition to the more independent learning approaches often employed in secondary schools (Baartman, 2020).

Academic requirements: In South Africa, secondary schools typically have higher academic expectations compared to primary schools. Learners may struggle to adapt to the intensified workload, broader range of topics, and overall academic rigor. This transition can lead to tension, anxiety, and a decline in academic performance (van Zyl, 2018).

Social Integration: The transition to secondary school is a multifaceted process that can have a profound impact on learners' academic performance and socioemotional well-being (Langenkamp, 2009; Benner, 2017). Social integration, encompassing variables such as teacher bonding, popularity, and engagement in extracurricular activities, assumes a pivotal role during this period of transition (Langenkamp, 2009). Supportive peer relationships, particularly high-quality friendships, can facilitate the adjustment to the unfamiliar environment (Fenzel, 1986). Racial or ethnic identity and alignment with the social context also exert an influence on this transition, as changes in racial or ethnic identity often manifest during this phase (French, 2000). Disruption of supportive relationships during the transition can detrimentally affect academic performance and contribute to socioemotional disturbances (Benner, 2017). Consequently, it is imperative for educational institutions to cultivate inclusive, nurturing environments and foster positive connections with both educators and peers in order to provide valuable support to learners during this critical period (Benner, 2017).

Organizational Skills: The transition to secondary school poses a challenge in the development of organizational skills (Rosenbaum, 1995). This is particularly crucial during times of school restructuring, where teachers can play a pivotal role in facilitating the transition (Tewel, 1994). Hamida (2021) stresses the necessity for secondary school learners to cultivate these skills, as they are fundamental for future success. Effective organizational development within schools necessitates visionary leadership, strategic planning, and a systemic approach (Snyder, 1994). These findings underscore the significance of addressing organizational skills during the transition to secondary school.

The transition to secondary school has also been associated with increased stress, decreased confidence, subpar academic performance, and an elevated risk of maladjustment (Alvidrez & Weinstein, 1994). Moreover, the transition from middle to secondary school entails a novel environment, as well as new responsibilities and behaviours for the learner (Pérez-Cuevas, et al., 2000). These include an expanding learner population with increased variability, alterations in the structure of the school day, and a greater number of instructors with diverse skill sets.

Many children and their families encounter difficulties when transitioning from one school to another, particularly when it involves moving to a different facility and leaving behind familiar routines and well-established social support networks (Williamston, 2010). Due to the high incidence of course failures and dropout rates in the eighth grade, the transition to secondary school has become increasingly significant. The learner's academic performance in eighth grade serves as the most accurate predictor of secondary school dropout (Williamston, 2010).

Transitioning from primary to secondary school may be a difficult experience for many South African learners. This phase of transition is frequently fraught with difficulties that might have an influence on a learner’s academic and social well-being. Understanding and dealing with these issues is critical for schools to provide a successful and helpful transition process.

Support systems of learners transitioning from primary to secondary school

Peer Support Importance: Lester and Cross (2015) highlighted that learner generally felt supported by their peers, emphasizing the significance of peer relationships during the transition. According to the findings by Spernes (2022) peer support was discovered to be

critical for a healthy transition to secondary school, with learners feeling supported by their peers and those experiencing peer difficulties more likely to have a poor transition.

The transition from primary to secondary school is a significant period in a learner's educational journey, marked by various challenges and adjustments. Research has identified several key support systems and strategies that can facilitate this transition for grade eight learners moving to secondary school.

One study highlights the importance of understanding the dynamic nature of transitions, suggesting that what learners are excited about and concerned about changes over time. Effective preparation by schools, although varied, were not always effective or timely, and did not always tap into naturally occurring support networks in the home and community (Jindal-Snape & Cantal, 2019).

Another study emphasizes the role of school connectedness in academic outcomes across the transition period. It was found that learners' perceptions of school support significantly declined across the sixth-grade year. However, those who reported less decline or growth in school support had higher academic achievement at the end of the year than learners who reported more decline in school support (Niehaus, Rudasill, & Rakes, 2012.

The School Barometer survey, covering various topics including information flow, reactions to school lockdowns, and digital teaching and learning, provides insights into the roles and expectations of parents, learners, school staff, and leadership during transitions (Huber et al., 2020). This survey is grounded in theories from school effectiveness, school improvement, and education leadership, among others (Huber et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the concept of "scaffolding" is presented as an alternative to basic skills training for supporting low-achieving learners. Scaffolding involves providing increased support when needed, which is gradually decreased as the learner becomes more independent. This approach allows learners to engage in the same assignments as their peers but with additional support when necessary (Jansson, 2018).

Parental and Teacher Support: Studies by various authors, such as Bailey and Baines (2012), underscored the crucial roles of parents and teachers in supporting learners through the transition period.

Need for Active Communication: Active communication between primary and secondary schools, as advocated by Wes et al. (2010), is essential to empower parents and ensure a smooth transition for learners.

Importance of Transition Programs: Transition programs, as suggested by multiple studies like Waters et al (2013), play a vital role in fostering positive social and emotional outcomes during the primary-secondary school transition.

Enhancing Peer Socialization Skills: Research by Pellegrini and Van Ryzin (2011) emphasized the implementation of peer tutoring and cooperative learning to enhance peer socialization skills among learners transitioning between schools.

Building Appropriate Scaffolds: Vaz et al (2015) stressed the importance of building appropriate scaffolds to support learner diversity during the transition period.

Lastly, the role of social support from teachers, classmates, and family is underscored as crucial for school-related well-being, which in turn impacts learners' subjective health complaints. A comprehensive approach that includes all three types of social support is essential for a successful transition (Simovska et al., 2019).

In summary, the literature suggests that a multifaceted approach involving dynamic transition planning, fostering school connectedness, employing scaffolding techniques, and ensuring robust social support systems are key strategies for supporting grade eight learners transitioning to secondary school.

The support system for learners transitioning between primary and secondary schools encompasses peer, parental, and teacher support, active communication between schools, implementation of transition programs, and the creation of scaffolds to cater to diverse learner needs.

The Impact of gender differences in the transition experience from primary school to secondary school

Gender differences in the transition experience from primary school to secondary school have been a topic of interest in various research studies. One study found that the FIRST robotics program had different effects on men and women for both high-school learners and graduates (Yoel & Dori,2021). The program showed a significant difference in the mean impact of FIRST on career choice between men and women, with men having a higher mean impact. Additionally, there was a significant difference in the mean STEM

exposure between men and women, with women having a higher mean exposure (Yoel & Dori,2021)

Another study examined the impact of alternative grade configurations on learner outcomes through middle and secondary school. The study found that there were no differences in effect size for girls and boys in terms of the effects of middle and secondary school transition on learner achievement (Schwerdt & West,2013).

Furthermore, a study on school context and gender differences in mathematical performance among school graduates in Russia found that the ratio of boys to girls in the data was about 8 to 10, indicating a bias against girls. However, the size of this bias was unclear (Schwerdt & West,2013).

While some studies have found significant gender differences in the transition experience from primary school to secondary school, others have found no significant differences. It is important to consider the specific context and population when examining this issue.

Bullying experienced by grade eight learners in transitioning to secondary school

The transition from primary to secondary school is a key phase in a learner's life that is frequently marked by a variety of difficulties, including bullying. According to research, bullying is a common problem among learners during this transitional period. Woods and Wolke (2004) examined direct and relational bullying among primary school children and its influence on academic success, demonstrating that bullying experiences can have long-term consequences for learners' academic performance.

Furthermore, Pellegrini, Bartini, and Brooks (1999) examined the characteristics associated with social connections and victimization in early adolescence, suggesting that the dynamics of bullying may vary when learners enter secondary school.

Cappadocia et al (2011) discuss the significance of peer processes in bullying, which informs preventative and intervention efforts, emphasizing the need of understanding peer dynamics throughout the secondary school transition.

Furthermore, Zych et al (2021) study on childhood risk and protective factors as predictors of adolescent bullying roles sheds light on the long-term predictors of involvement in various bullying roles, including mental health, individual, family, peer, and school

predictors. This study emphasizes the complexities of bullying behaviours, as well as the importance of early interventions that target identified risk and protective variables.

Moreover, researchers explore the perspective of bullying in early childhood education, emphasizing the importance of anti-bullying action plans in educational settings. These programs seek to recognize hostile situations among learners at an early stage and address any conditioning factors that may lead a person to be a victim or offender.

The transition from primary school to secondary school is a critical period in a learner's educational journey. It marks a significant milestone where learners are faced with new challenges, opportunities, and experiences.

While research has highlighted various factors influencing the experience of grade eight learners during the transition, there are still gaps in our understanding of how-to better support learners during this critical period. Further research is needed to explore the impact of transitional programs, teacher support, parent involvement, and learner well-being on a successful transition.

In the South African education system, the transition from primary to secondary school is particularly challenging due to unequal access to quality education, resource disparities, and socio-economic factors that impact learners' experiences. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers the diverse needs of learners and provides adequate support systems to ensure a smooth transition.

Overall, the transition from primary to secondary school is a complex process that requires attention from educators, policymakers, and researchers to ensure that all learners have equal opportunities for success. By addressing the gaps in current research and understanding the challenges facing learners, we can work towards creating a more seamless and supportive transition experience for all learners.

Policies to better illuminate a successful transition

Relevant policies are vital for dealing with diverse difficulties and encouraging constructive change (Lindquist & Wanna,2011).

Engaging authorities on the need for policy reform needs more than just providing facts; it also necessitates a more in-depth knowledge of the various issues at play (Lindquist &

Wanna,2011). Policy is acknowledged as an important component of behavioural research for improving public health outcome (Lawrence & Yeatman,2008).

There are numerous relevant policies that could assist to clarify the recommendations for implementing targeted support efforts for learners transitioning from primary to secondary school. Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is one of the policies, which emphasizes the significance of delivering a well-rounded education to all learners and ensuring that they have the necessary help to achieve academically. This includes specific support for learners who may be struggling with their transition to secondary school.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) intends to help children transition from primary to high school by highlighting the need for "wraparound support systems for vulnerable communities". While the transition from primary to secondary school can still be difficult, the enhanced flexibility and emphasis on inclusion under ESSA has the potential to improve results for all learners, including those with disabilities. As educators attempt to implement the provisions of ESSA, it will be critical to continue prioritizing individual learners' needs and ensuring that the transition process is tailored to their specific circumstances and experiences (Yell et al.,1997).

Moreover, the Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS) policy encourages the creation of a welcoming school environment and proactive disciplinary procedures that help learners succeed. This can assist establish inclusive social environments and offer learners with the support they require to make the transition to secondary school.

A key component of PBIS is the use of tiered interventions, in which universal supports are offered to all learners while more intense interventions are targeted to those who require them (Cox,2019). During the transition to high school, this tiered approach can assist in identifying learners who may be struggling and providing them with the required resources, such as mentorship, social skills training, or behavioural coaching (Keller et al.,2019).

Furthermore, PBIS emphasizes the significance of fostering a healthy school environment and culture, which may be especially beneficial for learners navigating the enormous transitions and challenges of secondary school (Watkins, 2018). PBIS may assist ease the transition and prepare learners for long-term success by instilling a feeling of belonging,

creating healthy connections between learners and staff, and rewarding achievements by learners (Cox,2019).

In conclusion, chapter two has presented an in-depth review of the theoretical framework behind this study, which is based on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This theory lays the groundwork for comprehending the complex processes that determine human development by revealing the connectivity between individuals and their environment. Furthermore, the chapter included a full review of the literature, combining current findings and perspectives that contribute to the continuing debate on this topic. The combination of the theoretical framework and literature review lays the groundwork for the empirical research that follows, allowing for a more nuanced review of the elements impacting individual development and transition within their ecological setting.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology

This chapter discusses the study's design, methodology, objectives, and sampling techniques used in the study. A summary of the participant demographics, recruitment, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness criteria is provided.

Research approach

Researchers use research methodologies as core procedures in their studies, with approach selection impacted by the nature of the topic in question and the practical consequences of the topic of study (Kankam, 2020). The area of research approaches and methodology is vast, and it is critical for learners as well as scholars to have knowledge and comprehension of the numerous ways accessible (Sakyi, 2020). There are two types of research: qualitative and quantitative.

This study will use a method of qualitative research. Qualitative research is a methodological technique that seeks a thorough knowledge of the social setting, notably in public health (Kemparaj, 2013).

Qualitative research methods are a large category of approaches used to explore social and cultural phenomena, according to Toloie-Eshlaghy (2011). Research uses qualitative approaches to extract specific responses and offer distinct viewpoints; these methods often focus more on the "why" than the "what" (Dongre, 2010).

Scholars doing this kind of research support an inductive process-based research strategy that emphasizes human meaning, acknowledges the complexity of a situation, and values research methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Understanding the difficulties that learners encounter when they make their transition to secondary school depends heavily on qualitative research. It offers a deep and all-encompassing comprehension of the experiences, viewpoints, and motives of learners (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Through the utilization of qualitative research methodologies like observations and interviews, researchers may get a comprehensive comprehension of the challenges faced by learners throughout this crucial phase of educational transition.

Due to its emphasis on the experiences of research participants and exploring human relationships within their cultural, socioeconomic, and political settings, a qualitative

method was crucial to helping me achieve the aim of this study. Through the use of this the approach, I was able to explore the transitional experiences of eighth-grade learners into secondary school.

Research design

A study's research design is essential since it offers a methodical approach to solving a scientific issue (Indu, 2019). The latter is further divided into experimental and non-experimental designs (Indu, 2019). With a well-defined strategy for data collection, measurement, and analysis, the design needs to be tailored to the particular study question and hypothesis (Akhtar, 2016).

In research, popular qualitative techniques including ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology are employed to investigate the significance of experience (Grossoehme, 2014).

As stated by Burns and Grove (2010), a research design describes how to perform a study in a way that maximizes control over possible obstacles to the intended result. In order to better understand how eighth-grade learners felt about moving to secondary school settings, the researcher used a qualitative exploratory approach in this study.

Exploratory research, as described by Polit and Beck (2012), aims to comprehend how a particular event occurs and the factors that influence it. When there is limited knowledge about phenomena, exploratory research is conducted to generate new insights, uncover new meanings, and expand understanding (Mamabolo & Tjallinks, 2010).

Many fields, such as management science, the social sciences, and tourism, depend heavily on exploratory research design. Understanding and properly implementing this design is crucial for advancing research, as Olawale (2023) points out. Mason (2010), especially in the tourist sector, highlights the need of taking a methodical approach throughout the qualitative first stages of mixed methods research. Hay (2020) supports this theory by presenting a methodical way to analyse ideation in exploratory design. This technique encourages problem research and allows for performance evaluation. These papers highlight the value of exploratory research design in producing fresh ideas and comprehending intricate phenomena when taken as a whole.

The research design for this study is exploratory, with a case study approach used to investigate the transitioning experiences of grade eight learners from primary to secondary

school. Exploratory research is suitable for this area of study since it allows for an in-depth investigation of a specific phenomena, in this instance the transition process. This research design attempts to give a deep and context-specific understanding of grade eight learners as they transition to secondary school. The study will use interviews to discover the challenges, achievements, and emotions that learners confront at this time of major change. Finally, this research design will give significant insights and recommendations to help and enhance the transition process.

Sampling

Population

The research population is the entire collection of individuals or things used to collect data for a research endeavour (Asiamah et al.,2017). The researcher intends to study and draw conclusions about the larger group. The research population is distinct from the sample, which is a smaller, more controlled subset of the population being studied. The population for this study were the grade 8 learners.

Exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria in research are particular factors or features that prevent participants from being included in a study. They are used to guarantee that the research population is homogenous and that the results are not influenced by confounding variables. Exclusion criteria contribute to the internal validity of the research.

The aim of exclusion criteria is to eliminate participants who do not satisfy the study's particular requirements, such as having certain medical problems, using certain drugs, or showing certain behaviours. This allows researchers to focus on the target population and isolate the impact of the factors under study (Gill&Gill,2020).

Exclusion criteria are an important part of research design since they serve to assure the validity and reliability of the study results (Furner,2002). By properly establishing and using exclusion criteria, researchers may reduce the influence of confounding factors and boost confidence in the data-driven results. Exclusion criteria in research are particular factors or traits that prevent a potential study participant from being included in a study (Gill&Gill,2020). These criteria assist researchers in ensuring the validity and reliability of their findings by removing participants who might add confounding variables or bias into the study.

The exclusion criteria for this research study centred on learners who were repeating grade eight, allowing the researcher to focus on the experiences of learners who made the transition from primary to secondary school for the first time. By excluding individuals who were repeating a grade, the study attempted to collect insights and understandings from a more homogeneous sample of participants, allowing for a more concentrated exploration of the challenges and successes associated with this key moment of transition. This choice was made to assure the findings' validity and applicability, as well as to enable a more in-depth investigation of the unique experiences of learners navigating this transition for the first time. The participants were in their third month of grade eight.

Study context

South Africa's Soweto, an area of Johannesburg in Gauteng, has a rich cultural heritage that has changed dramatically over time. Numerous historical and modern causes have influenced its socioeconomic circumstances, political environment, and educational system, among other variables.

As a township designed specifically for Black Africans, Soweto's history is closely linked to South Africa's apartheid period. Apartheid was a system that divided South Africans based on race and affected many facets of life, including work, housing, and education. This segregation was a component of that larger system (Heffernan,2019). Important developments in the township's history occurred during the 1976 Soweto Uprising, which was a turning point in the fight against apartheid. Afrikaans, a language connected to the dominant white minority, was required to be taught in Black schools by the apartheid regime, which set off the rebellion. Learners around Soweto protested in large numbers, believing this policy to be an attempt to further oppress the Black majority (Heffernan,2019).

The South African government has worked to address these differences through a number of educational changes since the end of apartheid. Curriculum 2005 was put into effect in 1998 with the intention of changing the legacy of the past and giving all learners equitable access to education. However, in part because most schools lack adequate library-based resources, outcomes-based education (OBE) failed to dramatically improve the situation in historically marginalized and disadvantaged rural areas, townships, and informal settlements despite these changes (Mattes,2011).

Despite these challenges, the community around Senaoane Senior Secondary School is noted for its close-knit character and perseverance. Several community groups and initiatives collaborate to help the school and its learners. Local leaders, parents, and community members commonly work together to campaign for better educational resources, facilities, mentoring programs, and scholarships.

Furthermore, Soweto possesses a rich cultural legacy and a strong feeling of communal identity. The township has produced renowned politicians, athletes, and artists who serve as role models for Senaoane Senior Secondary School learners. These success stories encourage and inspire learners to overcome difficulties and achieve excellence.

Sample

In research, sampling is the process of selecting a subset of a population to gather data (Turner, 2020). The sample size is vital to consider since it affects the study's statistical power and ethical consequences (Andrade, 2020). The selection of a representative sample is very important in qualitative research, and the literature on sampling methodologies need greater clarity and consistency (Gentles, 2015).

According to Gentles et al. (2015), sampling is the process of choosing particular data sources from which data is collected in order to achieve the study's goals. In order to ascertain the appropriate number of participants for research, a representative sample of the population must be chosen. In order to systematically choose a smaller number of representative items or people (a subset) from a preset population to act as subjects (data sources) for observation or experimentation in accordance with the goals of the research, researchers employ the sampling approach (Sharma, 2017).

For this research, a sample of 15 grade eight learners, consisting of both girls and boys, was used. According to Baker and Edwards (2012) in Vasileiou et al. (2018), qualitative research scholars argue that there is no straightforward answer to the question of sample size, and it depends on various epistemological, methodological, and practical considerations.

Sampling Procedures

Sampling is essential to guaranteeing the precision and applicability of research findings. However, as Sarstedt (2018) points out, there is frequently a discrepancy between advised probability sampling techniques and their actual use. Turner (2020) highlights the value of understanding the data gathering process while highlighting the feasibility and costs of sampling from a population. Probability and non-probability sampling approaches are

summarized by Bhardwaj (2019) as simple random, systematic random, and stratified random sampling are included in the former category, while convenience, self-selection, quota, snowball, and purposive sampling are included in the latter.

Probability sampling ensures that every person in the population has an equal chance of selection. This method presupposes that every person in the population has a chance (greater than zero) of being selected for the sample. Probability samples are related with the following kinds of sampling processes: simple random, systematic random, stratified, and cluster sampling (Bhardwaj,2019).

When there is minimal interest in applying results from the sample to the population or when the population is poorly defined, non-probability sampling is employed. The primary justification for employing a non-probability sampling technique is its expediency and affordability (Michael, 2011).

In this study, a non-probability sampling method with the convenience sampling procedure was employed. Convenience sampling, also known as opportunity, accidental, or random sampling, is a type of non-probability sampling where the sample is selected from a population that is easily accessible and convenient. Researchers using this type of sample cannot make objective conclusions about the entire population since it is not sufficiently representative (Michael, 2011).

A convenience sampling approach is utilized to select samples from the general population due to their easy accessibility to the researcher (Vehovar, 2016). This method allows for the simple selection of samples without the need to approximate the total population.

In this approach, the researcher selects either an individual or a group of individuals for sampling. The study is then conducted over a specific period of time to analyse the results, and if necessary, another group may be selected (Vehovar, 2016).

According to Cohen et al. (2018) and Babbie (2019) convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling approach where participants are chosen based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. Researchers often employ this method when they have limited resources in terms of time or funding, as it allows them to conveniently reach individuals who are readily available.

I have chosen this sampling method because the research was conducted in a school setting, making the recruitment process easier by selecting participants based on their availability. This approach increased the likelihood of obtaining an adequate sample size within the limited timeframe available.

Recruitment procedures

The recruitment process in research holds significant importance and necessitates careful consideration. Edleson (1979) and Kumar (2015) both emphasize the significance of effective recruitment strategies, with Edleson specifically comparing different approaches and Kumar (2015) highlighting the utilization of employee references and online portals. Similarly, Manohar (2018) and DeRenzo (2020) emphasize the ethical dimension of recruitment, with Manohar (2018) stressing the need for clear and accurate information and DeRenzo cautioning against coercive methods. Collectively, these studies underscore the importance of a well-planned, ethical, and effective recruitment process in research.

Several stages were taken in the recruiting procedure for this qualitative study on the experiences of grade eight learners transitioning from primary school to secondary school utilizing convenience sampling.

In the recruitment process, the research proposal was submitted to the ethics committee for review, the research proposal was approved by the University's research ethics and an ethical clearance to conduct the study was issued. Secondly permission was requested from the Department of Basic Education to recruit learners from Senaoane Secondary school. In doing so, I firstly called the Department of Basic Education to get an email address for the person I emailed the request to conduct the study at Senaoane Secondary, I then received the relevant email address and emailed the request to conduct the study.

Once approval was obtained (See attached in Appendix H), I contacted Senaoane secondary to propose the study and solicit their permission to conduct the study in the school. A total of 15 eighth-grade learners were recruited for the study. Before any data collection began, participants and their parents or guardians provided informed consent.

Overall, the recruiting procedure was thoroughly managed to ensure that participants were selected in accordance with ethical rules and gave a varied variety of feedback on the transition from primary to secondary school.

Research instrument(s)

The interview guide holds significant importance in research as it ensures comprehensive coverage of topics and facilitates the acquisition of necessary details (Magnusson, 2015). It is more than just a list of questions; rather, it serves as a means of understanding the interviewee's behaviour, personality, opinions, and beliefs (Sachan et al.,2012). Thus, it is crucial to carefully prepare the guide, paying attention to polished wording, language choices, and engaging in a pretesting and revision process (Magnusson, 2015). Additionally, creating a conversational and relaxed tone during the interview is essential (Magnusson, 2015). The interview guide acts as a memory aid for the interviewer and helps maintain focus throughout the interview (Gillham, 2000).

As a qualitative research instrument, the interview guide provided a formal framework for conducting interviews, ensuring that all relevant subjects and questions are addressed. It contained the questions that were asked during the interviews, which primarily consisted of open-ended questions. The estimated duration of the interview was approximately 10 minutes, and the questions were structured.

The interviews lasted only 10 minutes rather than longer during the research interview since the participants gave brief and efficient responses, allowing the interview procedure to be completed in less time. The questions asked were also simpler and required shorter replies, resulting in a more efficient dialog between the interviewer and the participant. The interviews were brief, which not only saved time for both parties but also guaranteed that the research objectives were accomplished on time. Furthermore, the participants' ability to react confidently and properly to questions increased the efficiency of the interviews, resulting in a successful data gathering procedure.

Pretesting

Pretesting is an essential process that guarantees the questions in surveys, questionnaires, and psychometric scales are comprehended and perform as intended (Hilton, 2017). Because it may be used to evaluate learning objectives and assess the effects of pedagogical improvements, it is especially crucial in educational contexts (Sheran, 2012). This procedure, which identifies and addresses mistakes and problems in the questionnaire design, can greatly enhance the quality of the data (Grimm, 2010).

In pretesting, a sample of four learners were selected, two were interviewed in the first phase of the pretest and another two on the second phase after the feedback of the first two in the first phase was given.

The second phase of the interview guide's pretesting took place after it turned out that participants were having difficulty understanding some terminology utilized, such as "transitioning." It became clear that the usage of specific vocabulary was confusing and hindering efficient communication between the researcher and the participants. To solve this issue and assure clarity during the interview process, it was decided to replace difficult phrases like "transitioning" with more widely comprehensible language, such as "moving." This modification is intended to remove any potential hurdles to understanding, allowing participants to express their thoughts and feelings more precisely and easily throughout the interviews.

The second round of pretesting increased the overall efficacy of the interview guide, and the quality of data obtained by adjusting the wording to better match the participants' language competence.

Based on the feedback received, the researcher revised the interview guide to effectively address the issues identified during the pretesting process. The revisions encompassed rephrasing questions to enhance clarity and refining the sequencing of the questions. The questions that were revised were the first two questions and they were rephrased as follows.

The first question which was “What experiences did you go through when transitioning?” was rephrased to “Can you share your experiences during the transition from primary school to secondary school?”

The second question which was “How did transitioning from primary to secondary school affect you?”

This question was rephrased to “How did moving from primary to secondary school impact you?”

Method(s) of data collection

Interviews were used as the data gathering approach in this study. The purpose of interviews was to learn more about the participants' viewpoints, emotions, ideas, and

interpretations of their experiences (Pacho, 2015). The use of interviews is consistent with the idea that the researcher is the main tool used in qualitative research to collect and analyse data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

All participants were asked the same established set of questions in the same order and format during the structured interviews. By ensuring that all participants are assessed using the same criteria, this standardized technique makes it simple to compare the results (King, 2004). Structured interviews improve the accuracy of the information gathered.

The interviews took place inside an office for privacy purposes, the interviews were approximately 10 minutes long and the data collection took seven working days as the interviews were conducted during break time and whenever the children did not have a teacher in the class.

Methods of data analysis

Data analysis, according to Creswell (2009), entails analysing the data and making sure it is appropriate for extensive research. It involves arranging data such that it makes sense and responds to the study questions and topic. This entails actively interacting with the material, coming up with an interpretation of its wider relevance, and learning more about it (Creswell, 2009).

According to Clark et al. (2015), Thematic Analysis (TA) is a simple, flexible, and widely used method for analysing qualitative data. Acquiring proficiency in theme analysis offers qualitative researchers a strong basis in the fundamental abilities required to utilize many methods of qualitative data analysis.

Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is an analysis of themes that are essential to comprehending phenomena. I adhered to the methodology described by Braun and Clarke (2006) for the subsequent stages of concept content analysis when performing research analysis. First, I transcribed all of the material from the recordings to become familiar with the interview issue at hand. To find reoccurring themes and key ideas, I then routinely went over the transcripts, listened to the audio recordings, and examined the field notes.

The second stage entails developing initial codes. This stage comprises identifying important concepts, topics, and themes found in the data. These notions and themes are then given codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I started looking for and classifying initial codes

of data that represented the grade eight learners' concepts, feelings, or experiences. This involved stressing specific comments, perspectives, and experiences reported by learners.

I combined comparable codes to uncover themes that represent the essential experiences of grade eight learners. I looked for repeating patterns, similarities, and connections in the data that might serve as the foundation for overarching themes. The codes were then evaluated to determine how they can be merged or grouped into themes, and all data related to each possible theme was collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage was also crucial for re-analysing the data in terms of identified themes.

The fourth stage entailed the comprehensive examination of the identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process involved carefully reading, rereading, and scrutinizing the data extracts. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase should be conducted in two distinct levels. Initially, the researcher cross-references the identified themes with the coded extracts and the entire data set to construct a thematic map, observing any inconsistencies or variations. Subsequently, the researcher identifies and provides a description for each theme.

I considered the connections between the potential concerns and the larger context of the research. I then reviewed and developed the themes to ensure that they correctly and thoroughly portray the grade eight learners' transitioning experiences.

Lastly, the researcher synthesized the findings with the existing literature and composed a final research chapter presenting reasoned arguments concerning the outcomes of the study. To ensure that the report accurately portrays the participants' experiences and is therefore deemed credible, verbatim extracts from the participant interviews are incorporated into the description of the themes.

I clearly outlined and named the final themes that captured the grade eight the experiences of learners as they move from primary to secondary school. I then assigned descriptive titles to each subject that expresses its essence. I then Integrated the thematic analysis into the research report, emphasizing the important themes, their relevance, and the implications for understanding grade eight learners' transition to secondary school.

Trustworthiness

In research, trustworthiness is an important but sometimes disregarded factor, particularly in qualitative research (Adler, 2022). For researchers, establishing trust worthiness is

crucial since it affects the original setting and influences social change (Collier-Reed, 2009). Integrity, striking a balance between participant meaning and researcher interpretation, and clearly communicating findings are all essential for qualitative research to become trustworthy (Williams, 2009).

The four requirements for trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability are outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985).

Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is an examination of whether the study findings constitute a credible conceptual conclusion based on the data collected from the original participants. To ensure credibility, researchers employ various approaches to ensure that the findings represent the perspectives of the participants. This includes conducting interviews and accurately transcribing the participants' statements.

Credibility is ensured by adopting appropriate and well-established research methods, gaining early familiarity with the culture of participating organizations, using random sampling of individuals as informants, employing triangulation with different methods, types of informants, and sites, employing tactics to ensure informant honesty, employing iterative questioning in data collection dialogues, and conducting negative case analysis.

In ensuring credibility I provided a thorough explanation of the study methodology, data gathering methods, and analytic procedures. Furthermore, I added real statements and quotations from participants and remained transparent throughout the study process.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability pertains to the extent to which the findings of a study can be applied or transferred to contexts beyond the immediate research scope. To meet this criterion, researchers provide detailed explanations of the techniques, processes, context, and data collected, allowing other researchers to assess the study's conclusions and its transferability.

In ensuring transferability the study report provided a full description of the research participants, setting, and data collecting procedures to help readers to analyse how the findings apply to their own situations.

Transferability was also ensured through the presentation of background data to establish the research context and a clear description of the phenomena under investigation to facilitate comparisons.

Dependability

Dependability can be achieved when the credibility of the findings is ensured. The reliability of the findings is closely related to the dependability criterion. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness cannot exist without reliability, and credibility cannot exist without dependability. This implies that once credibility is established, dependability must follow.

To ensure dependability, the use of "overlapping methods" and detailed descriptions of the methodology will allow for the study to be repeated. I also supplied a detailed explanation of the research process, including the adjustments made, so that others may examine the consistency and reliability of the study's findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the study data, such that two or more independent individuals would agree on the applicability or meaning of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To limit the influence of researcher bias and the disclosure of the researcher's opinions and preconceptions. I used a reflexive approach and documented my own prejudices and assumptions. In addition, I supplied an audit trail, which included raw data, coding, and analysis, so that the findings could be reviewed independently.

I also acknowledged limitations as acknowledging the limitations of the study techniques and their potential implications, detailed methodological explanations allow the integrity of the research results to be scrutinized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical considerations

Brink et al. (2006) discuss ethical considerations as encompassing the acknowledgement of the researcher's competence, ethical handling of research resources, accurate communication of results, and recognition of the impact of research on communities. It is essential for research involving human participants to adhere to recognized ethical standards and be grounded in scientific principles (Brink et al.,2006). The guidelines for ensuring the safety of human participants in research are provided by research ethics, which not only safeguard

participants but also educate and monitor researchers in the health field to maintain high ethical standards (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

The ethical considerations guiding this research included:

University ethics clearance and institutional approval

Prior to conducting the research, the researcher sought approval from the university ethics committee by submitting the research proposal. Additionally, a request was made to the Gauteng Department of Education, including a letter seeking permission to conduct research at Senaoane Senior Secondary, along with the university's ethics clearance certificate and all were received.

Informed consent

Informed consent is a research procedure that entails the exchange of information between the researcher and human participants. The information provided to participants should be sufficient, easily understandable by individuals with decision-making capacity, and participants should voluntarily choose to participate (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Respecting the autonomy and dignity of human participants necessitates allowing them to make an informed choice regarding their participation (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). In a study involving human participants, the concept of informed consent holds great importance from an ethical standpoint. It entails a process by which individuals willingly and knowingly agree to participate in research after receiving comprehensive information about the study's objectives, methodologies, risks, rewards, and other significant factors that may affect their decision to take part (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018).

Furthermore, consent forms play a critical role in serving as legal documentation that demonstrates participants' consent to participate in the research. This aspect is crucial for ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines and regulations. Consent forms also contribute to transparency and accountability, documenting the consent process and the information provided to participants (Emanuel et al., 2000).

The concept of informed consent guarantees that participants possess a thorough understanding of the implications of their involvement, empowering them to make autonomous, well-informed decisions based on their judgment.

Consent forms are an indispensable component of any research study, as they ensure that participants are fully informed about the nature of the study and voluntarily agree to participate. By signing a consent form, participants acknowledge their comprehension of the research procedures, potential risks, and benefits involved. This not only safeguards the rights and well-being of the participants but also upholds the integrity of the research (Jefford & Moore, 2008).

After getting permission from both the school and the department of education, I went to the school, explained what the research was about to the learners and gave out the consent forms and assent forms for them to give to their parents to seek permission. The learners returned the signed consent and assent forms, the interviews then took place.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Privacy and confidentiality are important factors of doing ethical research (Wiles et al., 2008). Although the two terms are commonly used interchangeably, they have different meanings. Privacy refers to restricting the sharing of information about individuals or groups participating in research projects. Protecting a participant's privacy involves regulating their public image (Fouka & Mantzorou, 2011).

'Confidentiality' relates to how data is maintained and stored. This refers to who gets access to the data collected and how much data is shared with individuals outside of the research. According to Sieber and Tolich (2012), privacy focuses on safeguarding individuals, whereas confidentiality ensures that data is shared in a way that minimizes participants' exposure to potential scrutiny or damage.

Ensuring confidentiality and privacy was a top priority during the research study, which involved conducting participant interviews in a private office to prevent others from overhearing important content. In addition, a secured cabinet was used for storing the consent and assent paperwork to keep out unwanted access. When the password-protected laptop was not in use, it was kept in a locked room with the participant data safely preserved inside. The names of the participants were left off of any reports or study-related paperwork in order to further preserve their privacy. To preserve their identities and confidentiality, they were instead referred to as "participants". Generally, throughout the research procedure, significant precautions were taken to protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Respect for participants

Respect for participants is, after all, a fundamental ethical principle that ought to direct any research involving human participants. During the research process, researchers need to be extremely careful to safeguard the rights and welfare of their participants.

A researcher should respect participants by not condemning or ridiculing them, and ensuring their perspectives are accurately documented and considered in the assessment process. The term 'participant' implies a level of respect, as opposed to ‘respondent' or ‘subject'. Respect includes safeguarding those with limited autonomy, marginalized groups, and vulnerable populations (Scott,2017).

In order to ensure that the participants felt secure and at ease enough to freely share their experiences and viewpoints, the researchers took great care to create a safe and welcoming setting for them. Active listening, empathy, and a sincere desire to comprehend the participants' views and feelings were examples of this regard.

In order to protect the participants' confidentiality and privacy during the research procedure, the researcher also took precautions for the well-being. Participants' sensitive information was treated with care and respect, and measures were made to guarantee that their names would not be revealed in the final report. The researcher made a concerted effort to gain and uphold the participants' trust throughout the research study because it was of utmost importance. In addition, the opinions of the participants were respected and taken into account appropriately when the data was analysed and interpreted. The researcher endeavoured to integrate the viewpoints of the participants into the outcomes, guaranteeing that their opinions were faithfully portrayed and recognized.

Specific permission required for audio or video

Researchers must get permission to record audio or video and should be aware of the content being recorded. To protect participants' privacy, researchers must obtain their permission before recording, filming, or photographing them (Reynolds & Lee,2018).

During the research interview, the precise permission needed for audio or video recording was carefully followed. The researcher assured that all participants were fully aware of the recording process and its intended use. Prior to beginning the interview, each participant was given consent paperwork that detailed the recording and clarified their rights concerning the use of the recorded material. It was emphasized that participation in the interview was

entirely voluntary, and that they could discontinue at any point without penalty. Participants were given adequate time to peruse the consent forms and ask questions before signing. The recording process began only after each participant had signed their consent forms.

Voluntary participation and no coercion

According to the concept of informed consent, participation must be voluntary and free of coercion or fear of harm for nonparticipation. Payments for participation should be proportionate to the participants' typical income expectations and not unreasonable enough to constitute a bribe or inappropriate incentive, while remaining non-coercive (Laktionova, 2021).

A research study must adhere to fundamental ethical principles, which include voluntary participation and no coercion. All of the participants in my study were made fully aware that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they were not obligated to take part. The researcher made sure that every participant knew there would be no financial benefit to them from taking part in the study and that there were no incentives or prizes attached. The researcher also made sure that every participant understood that they could withdraw from the research at any time and that there would be no repercussions.

Study limitations

The first limitation for this study was bias in participant selection, the validity of the findings may be impacted by biases in the participant selection process, because this study was conducted at a secondary school in Soweto, all the participants are from the same region and same demographic background, it would have been more interesting and in-depth information would have been gained if the participants were from different demographic backgrounds to get different insights.

The second limitation that surfaced in the study could be self-reporting bias, the questions that were asked during the interviews could have led to the possibility of participants not fully describing their experiences making the transition from primary to secondary school, which may have resulted in inaccurate data being gathered.

Some participants may have given answers that reflect expectations or social norms rather than their actual emotions or experiences, which can skew the findings.

The technique to overcome the limitation of participants providing answers that reflect expectations or societal norms rather than their actual experiences was to integrate a variety of data gathering methods into the study design. In addition to interviews, the researcher used observational techniques to capture more realistic behaviours and emotions from grade eight learners as they transition from primary to secondary school.

The researcher better identified and confirmed participants' genuine experiences by triangulating data from different sources and methodologies, as opposed to relying simply on self-reported data. Furthermore, the researcher incorporated validation checks and prompts to encourage participants to make more honest and introspective replies, ensuring that the findings correctly reflected the real feelings and experiences of the grade eight learners.

In conclusion, chapter three has covered an immense amount of detail regarding the study design, methods and sampling for the study. In order to guarantee the gathering of pertinent data to meet the research questions and objectives, the study design was properly established. The purpose of outlining the methodology was to give a clear framework for the conduct and analysis of the study. To direct the research process and to ensure the study's objectives are fulfilled, the objectives were determined. Lastly, a thorough explanation of the sampling approach was provided to clarify the process of choosing and enlisting research participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter provides the findings of a study that explored grade eight learners' transitioning experiences from primary to secondary school. Five themes—navigating uncertainty, social integration, academic adaptation, individual growth, and the importance of support were found in the data gathered from a sample of 15 learners after it was analysed. Quotations from the learners themselves are included with the findings, which are provided as numbers to give a more thorough knowledge of the experiences of the participants.

Table 1: Participant demographic information

Pseudonyms	**Gender**	**Age**	**School**	**Grade**	**Language spoken at home**	**Residence**
Participant 1	Male	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Venda	Chiawelo
Participant 2	Female	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Xhosa	Kliptown
Participant 3	Female	12	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Xhosa	Senaoane
Participant 4	Female	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Xhosa	Kliptown
Participant 5	Female	12	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Xhosa	Kliptown
Participant 6	Female	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	IsiZulu	Kliptown
Participant 7	Female	12	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Xhosa	Senaoane

Participant eight	Female	12	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Xhosa	Senaoane
Participant 9	Male	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Zulu	Dlamini
Participant 10	Female	12	Senaoane Secondary	eight	Sotho	Senaoane
Participant 11	Female	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	IsiZulu	Dlamini
Participant 12	Male	12	Senaoane Secondary	eight	IsiZulu	Dlamini
Participant 13	Male	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	IsiZulu	Phiri
Participant 14	Female	13	Senaoane Secondary	eight	IsiZulu	Chiawelo
Participant 15	Male	12	Senaoane secondary	eight	IsiZulu	Senaoane

Table 2: Themes and Subthemes

Themes And Subthemes	**Subthemes**
Theme 1: Navigating Uncertainty	
	1a. Fear of the unknown 1b. Lack of familiarity with secondary school expectations
Theme 2: Social Integration	
	2a. Making new friends. 2b. Adapting to a larger and more diverse social group

Theme 3: Academic adaptation	
	3a. adjusting to increased workload.
Theme 4: personal growth	
	4a. Increased independence 4b. Developing time management and organisational skills.
Theme 5: Importance of Support	
	5a. Role of teachers and mentors in the transition process 5b. Family support guidance 5c. Peer support networks

Navigating Uncertainty

The concept of "navigating uncertainty" pertains to our approach towards situations where the outcome is unclear or indeterminate (Leal Filho et al., 2022). This phenomenon is applicable across various domains such as economics, agriculture, social sciences, and scientific research. Uncertainty can be categorized into two types: irreducible uncertainty, which arises from random processes, and imprecision, which refers to the discrepancy between our current knowledge and accurate information (Leal Filho et al., 2022).

When the learners were asked to share their experiences during the transition from primary school to secondary school, all of them indicated navigating uncertainty, these were their responses:

"Uhm…. I was quite nervous about locating my lessons on the first day. I felt confused in such a large school"-Participant 1 (13 years old, Male)

Participant one shares their nervousness about finding their classes on the first day, which reveals their apprehension and anxiety. This emphasizes the emotional aspect of uncertainty during the transition process.

By acknowledging their feelings of nervousness and confusion, the participant highlights the significant impact of uncertainty on their initial experiences in secondary school. This demonstrates how uncertainty can influence one's emotions and perceptions during a transition period.

"I felt… confused and not sure of what was expected in terms of workload and social dynamics." -Participant 2 (13 years old, Female).

Participant two expresses confusion and uncertainty about workload expectations, indicating a lack of clarity and understanding about academic expectations at their new school. This highlights the uncertainty surrounding academic demands and requirements during the transition period.

Additionally, the participant mentions feeling confused and unsure about social dynamics, suggesting a lack of understanding or familiarity with the social aspects of their new school environment. This indicates the challenges of navigating relationships and interactions with peers in a new setting.

By highlighting the participant's feelings of confusion and uncertainty, they shed light on the impact of navigating uncertain expectations and social dynamics during the transition to secondary school. This emphasizes the challenges faced by learners in adapting to a new academic and social environment.

"I had to adjust to an entirely different environment and style of studying." - Participant 3 (12 years old, Female).

Participant three acknowledges the significant shift in their learning environment when transitioning from primary school to secondary school. This transition encompasses various aspects, including differences in classroom structure, teaching methodologies, available resources, and overall atmosphere. The quotation underscores the participant's awareness of the necessity to adapt to a new academic setting, highlighting the inherent uncertainty that arises from navigating such a transition.

Furthermore, participant three mentions the process of adjusting to a distinct studying approach in their new school. This adjustment may encompass variations in teaching methods, academic expectations, study techniques, or assessment criteria between primary and secondary school settings.

"I had to learn how to manage my academic, extracurricular, and social life."- Participant 4 (13 years old, Female)

This quote suggests that Participant Four encountered the challenge of balancing academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and social interactions in their new school.

The participant's acknowledgment of the necessity to acquire the skill of managing these aspects demonstrates their awareness of the augmented responsibilities and uncertainties that accompany the transition to a higher educational level.

"I was quite worried about beginning secondary school, I knew no one and had no idea what to anticipate."- Participant 5 (12 years old, Female)

Participant Five's quote shows the emotional reaction of the participant to the uncertainty that accompanies the commencement of secondary school. The sensation of worry indicates that the participant experienced anxiety and apprehension regarding the unfamiliar trials and alterations that awaited them in the new scholastic milieu. This emotional response is a ubiquitous reaction to transitions characterized by uncertainty, and it holds the potential to profoundly affect a learner's well-being and adjustment.

Participant Five's preoccupation with not knowing anyone at the unfamiliar school indicates the social challenges they encountered during the transition. Establishing new relationships and discovering a sense of belonging within a novel social environment can be quite daunting, particularly when commencing secondary school where the social dynamics may differ from those of previous educational institutions. Successfully navigating uncertainty in social interactions necessitates resilience, effective communication skills, and a willingness to venture beyond one's comfort zone.

"Many of us… experienced major changes and adjustment during this time." Participant 6 (13 years old, Female)

The quote by participant six uses the term "many of us" to highlight that grade eight learners share a collective experience during the transition. This suggests that the

challenges and adjustments faced when moving from primary school to secondary school are common, creating a sense of solidarity in navigating uncertainty.

The mention of "major changes" in the quote emphasizes the significant shifts that learners undergo during this transition. It is not just about academic adjustments, but also encompasses social, emotional, and personal changes that can deeply impact learners' identities and well-being. Navigating uncertainty during these major changes requires resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace new experiences.

"I had to learn how to effectively organize my time and expectations in a new academic setting."- Participant 7 (12 years old, Female)

The mention of organizing time indicates that Participant Seven is contemplating the significance of time management in a secondary school context. The act of juggling academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, personal obligations, and social engagements can pose a challenge for eighth-grade learners transitioning to secondary school. Cultivating effective time management skills is crucial for navigating unfamiliar territory and attaining academic success in this new environment.

Furthermore, the quotation underscores the importance of establishing realistic expectations in the new academic setting. Secondary school introduces learners to a distinct set of challenges and opportunities, necessitating adjustments in terms of academic performance, social interactions, and personal development. Setting clear and attainable expectations can aid participants in managing uncertainty, alleviating stress, and maintaining motivation throughout the transitional phase.

"I needed to learn how to manage a new social environment and academic hurdles."- Participant 8 (12 years old, Female)

The quotation underscores the significance of social adjustment for Participant Eight during the transition to secondary school. Successfully manoeuvring a novel social milieu encompasses the task of navigating peer relationships, forging new friendships, and finding a sense of belonging within the school community. Eighth-grade learners may encounter uncertainties pertaining to social interactions, peer dynamics, and social expectations,

necessitating their acquisition of adaptability skills and the ability to establish positive connections in their unfamiliar surroundings.

Participant eight explicitly mentions the imperative of managing academic obstacles within the new scholastic environment of secondary school. The transition from primary to secondary education often entails a change in academic demands, workload, and learning settings. Eighth-grade learners may grapple with elevated academic standards, augmented academic responsibilities, and unfamiliar subjects or courses. Consequently, they may experience doubts concerning their academic performance and abilities. The acquisition of effective strategies for managing academic hurdles is indispensable for effectively navigating the challenges of secondary school and attaining success within the new academic context.

"I had to figure out how to navigate a larger school with new expectations and obligations." Participant 9 (13 years old, Male)

The quote highlights the challenge faced by participant nine during the transition to a larger school environment. The transition to a larger secondary school can be overwhelming for eighth-grade learners as they navigate bigger campuses, a larger learner population, and different school dynamics. Adapting to a larger school involves adjusting to new physical spaces, classrooms, schedules, and routines, which can create uncertainties and feelings of disorientation among learners. Examining participant nine's experience in managing the transition to a larger school can shed light on the difficulties of navigating uncertainty in a new educational setting.

Participant nine mentions the importance of navigating new academic expectations and responsibilities in the larger secondary school setting. The transition from primary school to secondary school requires adapting to higher academic standards, a heavier workload, and more complex subject matter. Eighth-grade learners may encounter uncertainties related to academic performance, effective studying, and meeting the academic demands of different subjects and courses.

"I wasn't sure whether I could keep up with the issues. It felt overwhelming." - Participant 11 (13 years old, Female)

The quote exemplifies the feeling of being overwhelmed experienced by participant eleven during the transition to secondary school. The move from primary school to secondary

school can be an intimidating experience for eighth-grade learners. They must adapt to new academic expectations, social dynamics, and personal responsibilities. It is common for learners to feel overwhelmed by the uncertainties and difficulties encountered during this transition, as they strive to navigate the demands of a larger school and the complexities of adolescence.

Dealing with uncertainty is a prevalent theme among eighth-grade learners as they transition to secondary school. All 15 participants indicated experiencing uncertainty in various aspects of their new academic environment.

In analysing this theme as a whole according to the responses from participants, one of the primary sources of uncertainty for the participants was navigating the secondary school. Many learners expressed feelings of nervousness and anxiety when trying to find their way around the new school, with some finding the size and layout of the building overwhelming. This uncertainty often resulted in a sense of disorientation and feeling lost in the new environment.

In addition to the physical challenges of navigation, the participants also expressed uncertainty regarding the academic expectations in secondary school. Some learners mentioned feeling confused and unsure about what was expected of them in terms of homework, classwork, and exams. This lack of clarity regarding expectations contributed to feelings of insecurity and self-doubt among some participants.

Moreover, the participants mentioned the need to adjust to the overall secondary school environment, which can be overwhelming for eighth-grade learners. The transition to a larger and more complex social setting can be daunting, as it entails navigating new social dynamics and relationships. This adjustment process can also be stressful for learners as they strive to find their place within the new school community.

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that the transition from primary to secondary school represents a period of substantial uncertainty for learners. Silver (2017) highlights the role of inconsistent parental resources and information in contributing to this uncertainty, particularly for first-generation children. Grills-Taquechel (2010) underscores the anxiety and stress associated with this transition and highlights self-worth, social acceptance, and social support as potential predictors of anxiety. Barone (1991) emphasizes the adverse impact of this transition on academic achievement and identifies

life stress and social support as mediators of this impact. Altogether, these findings underscore the necessity for targeted assistance and resources to aid learners in navigating this challenging period.

Lastly, managing and organizing time proved to be a significant challenge for many eighth-grade learners in the study. Participants noted that the increased workload and demands of secondary school required them to develop new time management skills. Learning how to balance academic responsibilities with extracurricular activities and personal commitments was a major source of uncertainty for many participants.

Social Integration

Social integration is a multifaceted concept that encompasses the interconnection and participation of individuals within a society. It is commonly defined as the process of uniting diverse communities in order to establish a cohesive society where individuals experience a sense of belonging and inclusivity. Various forms of social capital, including bonding, bridging, and connecting social capital, play a crucial role in the development of a resilient community (Aslund & Nillson, 2013).

14 learners mentioned their struggles when it came to social integration, these were their responses:

"I found it difficult to build new friendships and fit in with current circles of friends" – Participant 1 (13 years old, Male).

Participant one's statement suggests that they had difficulty making new friends during secondary school, which may indicate experiences of social isolation or unfamiliarity with their new peer group.

Furthermore, the participant's mention of struggling to fit into existing friend groups implies the presence of established social dynamics that hindered their social integration.

The participant's depiction of facing obstacles in forming new friendships and fitting in with existing friend circles may have had emotional consequences, such as feelings of loneliness, rejection, or insecurity. These emotional implications could have impacted their overall secondary school experience and their sense of belonging within the school community.

"I struggled… to adjust to the social dynamics and groups of secondary school." Participant 2 (13 years old, Female).

Participant Two's statement acknowledges that they encountered difficulties in adapting to the social dynamics and social groups in secondary school. This suggests that they faced challenges in navigating the social environment of their new academic setting.

The participant's mention of struggling to adjust to social dynamics suggests the significance of social adaptation during the transition to secondary school. This may involve comprehending new social norms, group dynamics, and establishing relationships with peers.

The participant's description of struggling with social dynamics and social groups in secondary school indicates potential barriers to social integration, such as unfamiliarity with peer groups, social hierarchies, or cultural norms. This emphasizes the need for interventions or support systems to facilitate social integration and enhance the sense of belonging among learners.

"I had to engage more with my classmates to make new friends." Participant 3 (12 years old, Female).

The emphasis placed by the participant three on engaging with classmates in order to establish new friendships highlights their proactive approach to initiating social interactions and fostering new relationships within their new academic setting. This serves to underscore the significance of peer relationships in facilitating social integration.

The participant's focus on actively engaging with peers to forge new friendships suggests the development of social skills and communication strategies as part of their transition to secondary school. By actively seeking out opportunities to connect with classmates, the learner demonstrates a willingness to adapt and navigate the social dynamics within their new academic context.

Additionally, the participant's statement reflects a sense of agency and personal responsibility in the process of social integration. By taking the initiative to engage with classmates and establish new friendships, the learner demonstrates a proactive attitude towards overcoming social challenges and establishing positive social connections within their new school environment.

"I had both excitement and fear when attempting to fit into the social fabric of secondary school." Participant 4(13 years old, Female)

Participant Four's statement highlights a range of emotions - excitement and fear - that they experience as they try to fit into the social environment of secondary school. This illustrates the emotional complexity that learners face when navigating the social dynamics of their new academic surroundings, where they simultaneously anticipate and worry about what lies ahead.

By acknowledging both excitement and fear, the participant suggests the need for adaptable strategies to handle the social challenges that accompany the transition to secondary school. This recognition shows the learner's readiness to manage social uncertainties and engage in the process of social integration in a thoughtful and self-reflective way.

The participant's statement underscores the importance of social identity formation in the context of transitioning to secondary school. Their feelings of excitement and fear demonstrate their understanding of the social expectations and pressures involved in assimilating into the social fabric of their new educational environment. This highlights the significance of social belonging and acceptance in shaping their sense of identity.

"I was lonely at first, but then I found a group of friends who made me feel accepted, yeah." - Participant 5 (12 years old, Female)

In this quotation, Participant Five acknowledges experiencing initial loneliness but ultimately discovers a cohort of companions who provide a sense of acceptance. The participant's encounter with a group of friends who foster a sense of belonging accentuates the importance of social support during transitional periods. The participant's capacity to surmount feelings of isolation and establish a supportive circle of friends exemplifies resilience and adaptability.

"Establishing relationships with classmates made me feel more confident and comfortable at my new school." Participant 13 (13 years old, Male)

The participant Thirteen's statement underscores the positive impact of cultivating relationships with classmates on their overall experience during the transition period.

Through the establishment of a social circle and the engagement with fellow learners, the participant experienced increased confidence and comfort within their new school surroundings. This observation suggests that social integration plays a pivotal role in facilitating a smoother transition from primary school to secondary school for learners.

The participant's experience of enhanced confidence and comfort signifies that the development of relationships with peers contributed to a sense of belonging within their new school environment. This sense of belonging is crucial for social integration as it fosters a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere wherein learners can flourish and adapt to the challenges associated with transitioning to a different educational setting.

In addition to bolstering the participant's confidence and comfort, establishing connections with classmates also provided emotional support during the potentially overwhelming transition period. Having supportive friends who accepted the participant undoubtedly aided in navigating the social dynamics of the new school environment and in coping with any initial feelings of loneliness or isolation.

The participant's testimonial underscores the significance of promoting social integration initiatives in educational practices to assist learners as they make the transition from primary school to secondary school. Educators and school administrators should explore the implementation of programs or interventions that facilitate social bonding among learners, thereby enhancing their sense of belonging, confidence, and overall well-being throughout the transition process.

"Participating in groups and extracurricular activities improved my social integration.
"Participant 14 (Female, 13 years old)

First and foremost, Participant Fourteen's quotation emphasizes the significance of participation in group activities and extracurriculars in promoting social integration among eighth-grade learners. By involving themselves in these activities, learners are afforded the opportunity to interact with their peers in a non-traditional classroom setting, fostering connections, and establishing relationships that contribute to a sense of belonging and inclusion within the school community.

Moreover, the quotation implies that engagement in such activities can have a positive impact on social integration, suggesting that learners who actively participate in groups and extracurriculars may experience greater social connectedness and integration

compared to those who do not. This finding underscores the importance of providing learners with opportunities to engage in a diverse range of activities that cater to their interests and preferences, as this can have a significant influence on their overall sense of social well-being.

Overall, among the participants, 14 learners mentioned the difficulties they encountered in forming new friendships and fitting in with their peers, thus highlighting the challenges they faced in adapting to the social dynamics of secondary school.

One of the key findings from the research report was the overwhelming sense of loneliness and isolation experienced by many eighth-grade learners during their transition to secondary school. Participants expressed feelings of disconnection from their peers and struggled to establish meaningful relationships with their classmates. This sense of social isolation can have a profound impact on learners' well-being and can impede their overall academic and social development.

Additionally, participants underscored the challenges they encountered in assimilating into existing social groups and cliques in secondary school. Many learners expressed feelings of being outsiders or being excluded from social activities and gatherings. The pressure to conform to specific social norms and expectations in secondary school can be daunting for eighth-grade learners, resulting in feelings of insecurity and self-doubt.

Furthermore, participants mentioned the difficulties associated with navigating the complexities of social relationships and dynamics in secondary school. The transition from a smaller, more familiar primary school environment to a larger and more diverse secondary school setting can be overwhelming for many learners. Adjusting to new social hierarchies, peer interactions, and group dynamics can be particularly challenging, especially for learners who may already be experiencing anxiety or uncertainty regarding their social status.

Numerous research studies have examined the influence of social integration on the transition from primary to secondary school. Langenkamp (2009) discovered that factors such as teacher-learner relationships and involvement in extracurricular activities during middle school can have an impact on academic performance in secondary school. Fenzel (1986) emphasized the significance of supportive peer networks in facilitating a seamless transition to junior secondary school, particularly for female learners. Barone (1991)

identified life stress and social support as critical factors during this transition, with families, friends, and school authorities playing a pivotal supportive role. Bohnert (2013) stressed the importance of structured activities in assisting learners with social adjustment during the secondary school transition, particularly in terms of visibility and establishing connections with peers.

Academic Adaptation

Academic adaptation refers to how learners adjust to the educational environment, including their relationships with others, their activities, and the physical space. It involves finding a balance between the individual and the educational setting (Shamionov et al., 2020).

12 learners indicated academic adaptation after their challenges in transitioning, these were some of their responses:

"It was difficult at first…, but I joined study groups with friends, which greatly helped me adapt academically." Participant 2 (13 years old, Female).

Participant Two's quote exemplifies the initial obstacles encountered when transitioning from primary school to secondary school in terms of academic adaptation. The participant not only acknowledges the difficulties faced, but also underscores the significant influence of study groups formed with friends. This observation implies that peer support and collaborative efforts played a pivotal role in facilitating the participant's academic progress and successful adjustment to the novel scholastic setting. Consequently, it highlights the indispensability of social connections and support networks in fostering academic adaptation during the transitional phase.

"Transitioning to secondary school was challenging academically… I had to work twice as much to stay up, but it taught me great lessons in resilience and persistence" -Participant 4(13 years old, Female)

Participant Four acknowledges that the transition to secondary school presented academic challenges that required additional effort to maintain performance. Despite encountering these difficulties, the participant views this experience as a valuable opportunity to cultivate resilience and perseverance. This demonstrates the participant's ability to adapt and grow in response to challenges, ultimately acquiring essential skills that will enhance

their academic achievement. This quotation highlights the importance of persistence and determination in surmounting educational obstacles.

"I was shocked at how much faster the pace of learning was in secondary school versus primary school. It took some time to settle in, but now I am happier in my academic ability. Participant 5(12 years old, Female)

This quotation from Participant Five underscores the initial astonishment and period of adjustment that commonly accompanies the transition from primary school to secondary school. The participant acknowledges the substantial disparity in learning speed between the two levels, which initially presented a difficulty. Nevertheless, the participant also mentions that through time and effort, they were able to settle in and acclimate to the new academic environment.

The participant's affirmation of being more content with their academic competence suggests that they have developed and progressed as a learner since transitioning to secondary school. This signifies a favourable outcome of the academic adaptation process, as the participant has effectively adapted to the heightened demands and pace of learning in secondary school. Overall, this quotation accentuates the significance of perseverance, resilience, and adaptability in navigating academic challenges during the transition from primary school to secondary school.

"I was overwhelmed by all of the additional studies and tasks in secondary school. It was a significant transition from primary school, but I gradually got my feet and began to succeed." Participant 6(13 years old, Female)

The quote from Participant Thirteen provides insights into the challenges that learners encounter during the transition from primary school to secondary school, particularly in terms of academic adjustment. The participant expresses a sense of being overwhelmed by the increased workload and higher expectations in secondary school compared to primary school. This feeling of being overwhelmed is a common experience for many learners as they navigate the transition to a new educational environment that requires greater academic rigor.

However, despite this initial sense of being overwhelmed, the participant acknowledges that they were able to gradually adapt and find their place in secondary school. This highlights the significance of resilience and perseverance in overcoming academic

challenges and adjusting to a new learning environment. The participant's mention of starting to succeed suggests that with time and effort, they were able to enhance their academic performance and develop a stronger sense of confidence in their abilities.

"The work is definitely harder than in primary school, but I'm getting the hang of it."- Participant 7(12 years old, Female)

Participant Seven exemplifies the shared experience of numerous eighth-grade learners as they make the transition from primary school to secondary school. The participant acknowledges the heightened academic rigor in secondary school compared to primary school, a sentiment widely echoed among learners undergoing this transition. Nevertheless, the participant also conveys a sense of resilience and adaptability by expressing that they are "getting the hang of it." This suggests that despite the initial challenges faced in acclimating to the augmented academic demands, the learner is gradually establishing a sense of stability and cultivating confidence in their ability to excel in their studies. Such an adaptable mindset plays a pivotal role in enabling learners to effectively navigate the transition period and ultimately flourish in their newfound academic environment.

"Transitioning here was a bit hard especially when it came to other subjects, I had to work harder than before." Participant 8(12 years old, Female)

This quotation from Participant Eight highlights the various difficulties that grade eight learners commonly encounter when transitioning from primary school to secondary school, particularly in terms of academic adaptation. The participant acknowledges the challenging nature of this transition, particularly in terms of adjusting to the demands of different subjects. Many learners experience similar challenges when transitioning to secondary school, as they are faced with a broader range of subjects and higher academic expectations compared to primary school.

The statement also underscores the necessity of increased effort in order to meet these new academic challenges. This demonstrates the participant's understanding of the greater dedication and hard work required to succeed in secondary school compared to primary school. It also suggests a sense of perseverance and determination in overcoming these obstacles, which are essential qualities for learners to possess in order to adapt successfully to the academic demands of secondary school.

Overall, among the 15 participants, 12 learners indicated that they initially struggled to adapt academically to the demands of secondary school. They mentioned the challenges they faced in keeping up with the pace of learning and adjusting to the increased workload.

One of the key findings from the research report was that many grade eight learners experience a significant amount of academic pressure and stress during their transition to secondary school. Participants expressed surprise at the amount of additional studying and coursework required in secondary school, and many found it difficult to cope with the fast pace of learning. The transition from a more structured and less demanding primary school curriculum to a more rigorous and demanding secondary school curriculum can be a major adjustment for many learners.

Participants also emphasized the challenges they faced in effectively managing their time and workload. Many learners mentioned feeling overwhelmed by the volume of homework, assignments, and exams they had to complete in secondary school. The increased academic demands and expectations can be daunting for learners, especially those who have not yet developed effective study habits or time management skills.

Furthermore, participants mentioned the difficulty of adapting to new teaching styles and academic expectations in secondary school. The shift from a more integrated and holistic approach to learning in primary school to a more subject-specific and exam-oriented approach in secondary school can be challenging for many learners. Adjusting to new academic requirements, assessment methods, and grading criteria can be confusing and intimidating for learners, leading to feelings of academic insecurity and self-doubt.

Many studies have examined learners' academic adaptation during the move from primary to secondary school. Isakson (1999) discovered that this transition was linked to changes in both GPA and a sense of belonging in school, with family support playing a vital role. Likewise, Gillock (1998) emphasized the influence of teacher characteristics on learners' self-perception and academic achievement during this transition. Duchesne et al. (2005) identified three distinct patterns of academic functioning during this period, with early parental traits, child behavioral difficulties, and prosocial behaviour serving as significant predictors. However, Thakar and Modi (2014) did not provide any specific findings about this transition. These studies highlight the intricate interplay of individual, parental, and school-related factors that impact learners' academic adaptation as they move on to secondary school.

Personal Growth

Personal growth is the intentional and planned process of developing skills and bringing about positive changes in individuals. To measure personal growth, the Personal Growth Initiative Scale (PGIS) is used. The PGIS consists of four dimensions: change readiness, resource utilization, deliberate conduct, and addressing both cognitive and behavioral aspects of personal growth initiative (Chang et al., 2019).

13 learners indicated personal growth after their struggles, it shows that it encouraged growth and independence, these were some of their responses:

"Secondary school encouraged me to be more focussed on my schoolwork and not expect to be spoon-fed by the teacher like in primary." – Participant-1

This quotation serves as an exemplification of the theme of personal development within the context of transitioning from primary school to secondary school. Participant One acknowledges the shift in accountability, progressing from a situation wherein educators cater to their needs in primary school to a more autonomous and concentrated approach to academic tasks in secondary school. This showcases a positive shift in the mindset and attitude of the individual towards learning, illustrating a readiness to assume greater responsibility for their education and become more self-sufficient. The transformation highlights the growth and maturation experienced by the individual during this transitional phase, as they are compelled to adapt to a novel and more demanding scholastic environment. Furthermore, it underscores the significance of fostering independent study skills and self-motivation in order to equip learners for the challenges they will face in secondary school and beyond.

"Navigating the fresh environment of secondary school encouraged me to mature and improve my organizational skills"- Participant 2 (13 years old, Female).

This quote exemplifies the theme of personal growth in the context of transitioning from primary school to secondary school. Participant Two acknowledges the challenges of navigating a new environment, such as secondary school, and highlights the positive impact it had on their personal development. By mentioning how this transition encouraged them to mature, it shows that the participant recognized the need to adapt and grow in order to thrive in the new setting.

Furthermore, the mention of improving organizational skills indicates a practical aspect of personal growth. Secondary school typically requires learners to manage multiple subjects, assignments, and extracurricular activities, necessitating strong organizational abilities. The participant's acknowledgment of this improvement suggests that they have embraced the challenge and taken steps to enhance their skills in order to succeed in their new academic environment.

Overall, this quote illustrates an individual's willingness to adapt, learn, and develop in response to the significant changes that come with transitioning to secondary school. It showcases the importance of being open to new experiences and challenges as opportunities for personal growth and development.

"Secondary school made me plan everything accordingly, like the goals I want to reach, the career I want, it made me more focussed." Participant 3(12 years old, Female)

This quote also exemplifies the theme of personal development within the context of transitioning from primary school to secondary school. Participant Three's statement underscores the transformative effect of entering secondary school on their mindset and approach to future planning.

The reference to "planning everything accordingly" suggests that the participant now acknowledges the significance of setting objectives and establishing a strategic framework to achieve them. This showcases a heightened level of maturity and foresight in contrast to the primary school phase, where the focus might have cantered more on immediate tasks rather than long-term goals.

Furthermore, the participant indicates a greater sense of concentration resulting from the transition to secondary school. This signifies a shift towards heightened attentiveness and commitment to academic and career aspirations. Secondary school typically exposes learners to a broader range of subjects and opportunities, necessitating an elevated level of focus to navigate and excel in these novel challenges.

In sum, this quote underscores how the move to secondary school can stimulate personal growth, fostering enhanced skills in planning, goal setting, and concentration. It exemplifies a proactive mindset in moulding one's future and illuminates the transformative influence of the secondary school experience on a learner's development and perspective.

"Overcoming the hurdles of moving to secondary school helped me develop resilience and inner strength." Participant 4(13 years old, Female)

This quote effectively captures the theme of personal development when transitioning from primary school to secondary school. It specifically focuses on the growth of resilience and inner strength. Participant Four acknowledges the challenges they encountered during the transition and emphasizes the positive outcomes that resulted from overcoming these obstacles.

The mention of "overcoming the hurdles of moving to secondary school" suggests that the participant faced difficulties during the transition process. This may include adjusting to new expectations, coping with a heavier academic workload, or navigating social dynamics in a new environment. By acknowledging these challenges, the participant demonstrates self-awareness and a determination to confront and address obstacles directly.

Furthermore, Participant Four recognizes that overcoming these hurdles helped them cultivate resilience and inner strength. Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back from setbacks or adversity, while inner strength encompasses a deep-rooted inner resolve and fortitude. By facing and conquering the challenges of transitioning to secondary school, the participant has developed these important qualities that will serve them well in overcoming future obstacles and uncertainties.

This quote highlights the transformative power of overcoming challenges and adversity in fostering personal growth. It emphasizes the potential for growth and self-discovery that emerges from navigating difficult experiences and underscores the significance of resilience and inner strength in developing a resilient and adaptable mindset. Overall, the quote exemplifies how the transition to secondary school can act as a catalyst for personal growth, providing opportunities for learners to build character, resilience, and inner fortitude.

"Moving to secondary school taught me the value of creating goals and working towards them."- Participant 5(12 years old, Female)

This quote conveys the theme of personal growth within the context of transitioning from primary school to secondary school by emphasizing the significance of goal-setting and diligent effort. Participant Five acknowledges that the experience of moving to secondary

school has taught them the value of setting goals and actively working towards their attainment.

By stating that "moving to secondary school taught me the value of creating goals," the participant highlights a fundamental aspect of personal growth - the capacity to establish objectives and aspirations for oneself. The transition to secondary school likely presented the participant with new challenges and opportunities, necessitating a more proactive and purposeful approach to navigate successfully. This indicates a level of self-awareness and maturity in recognizing the importance of having clear goals and objectives to guide their actions and decisions.

Furthermore, the participant emphasizes the significance of actively pursuing these goals. This implies a sense of determination, perseverance, and diligence in striving towards their aspirations. By underscoring the importance of working towards their goals, the participant demonstrates a proactive and responsible attitude towards their personal development and academic achievement.

As a whole, this quote underscores the transformative nature of transitioning to secondary school in fostering personal growth. It highlights how the experience of moving to a new educational environment can impart valuable lessons about the efficacy of goal setting, determination, and diligent effort. By embracing the practice of establishing and working towards goals, the participant not only enhances their academic performance but also cultivates crucial life skills that will benefit them beyond their educational years. This exemplifies how the transition to secondary school can serve as a catalyst for personal growth, self-improvement, and accomplishment.

"I had to figure out how to manage my time and goals in a new academic setting."

Participant 6 (13 years old, Female)

This quote encapsulates the essence of personal development when making the transition from primary school to secondary school, particularly in terms of time management and goal setting within a new academic context. Participant Six reflects upon the obstacles encountered during this transition, specifically in navigating the expectations and demands of a distinct educational environment.

The mention of the necessity to "figure out how to manage time and goals" highlights the participant's recognition of the significance of these skills for triumph in secondary school.

The transition likely introduced novel academic responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and social pressures that necessitated a more organized and structured approach to effective time management. This signifies introspection and adaptability in acknowledging the need to adapt time management strategies to meet the fresh demands of secondary school.

Moreover, the participant acknowledges the importance of establishing goals in this new academic setting. By referencing the need to manage both time and goals, the participant emphasizes the interconnected nature of efficient goal setting and time management in attaining academic success. This demonstrates a mature understanding of the link between establishing precise objectives and efficiently allotting time and resources to attain them.

In summary, this quote highlights Participant Six's journey towards personal growth during the transition to secondary school. It underscores the challenges of adapting to a new academic environment and the significance of cultivating essential skills such as time management and goal setting. By acknowledging the need to modify their approaches to meet the demands of secondary school, the participant showcases a willingness to learn, develop, and excel in this new phase of their educational journey. This exemplifies the transformative potential of the secondary school transition in fostering personal development, resilience, and academic achievement.

"I felt a greater trust in myself and my ability as I adjusted to the academic and social demands of secondary school." Participant 15 (12 years old, Male)

Overall, among the 15 participants, 13 learners expressed the ways in which the challenges and demands of secondary school prompted them to cultivate a more concentrated mindset, mature both emotionally and intellectually, and strategically plan their activities and studies. Additionally, the secondary school environment facilitated the development of resilience and fortitude, the establishment of goals, and the adoption of effective time management techniques. One of the key findings from the research report was the positive impact that secondary school had on the personal growth and development of grade eight learners. Participants expressed how the heightened academic and extracurricular demands of secondary school served as a source of motivation, driving them to become more focused and dedicated to their studies and personal aspirations. The transition to secondary school provided a platform for learners to recognize the significance of maintaining a

disciplined approach to their academics, ultimately aiding them in attaining success and navigating challenges with efficacy.

Moreover, participants underscored how the transition to secondary school facilitated their emotional and intellectual maturity. The increased responsibilities and autonomy associated with secondary school acted as a catalyst for learners to cultivate a deeper sense of self-awareness and self-reliance. Many learners noted that secondary school stimulated their critical thinking skills, encouraged them to make informed decisions, and instilled a sense of ownership in their learning and personal development. This process of self-discovery and introspection made significant contributions to their overall growth and preparedness for future academic and personal hurdles.

Furthermore, participants highlighted how secondary school fostered their resilience and fortitude in the face of adversity. The academic pressures, social dynamics, and extracurricular commitments encountered in secondary school presented learners with ample opportunities to surmount obstacles, learn from setbacks, and persevere in the pursuit of their goals. Nurturing a resilient mindset enabled learners to rebound from academic setbacks, transcend failures, and remain motivated to achieve success in their academic pursuits.

Additionally, secondary school impelled learners to establish meaningful goals and practice effective time management. Participants emphasized the significance of setting realistic academic and personal objectives, devising a plan of action, and prioritizing tasks to accomplish their aims. The structured environment of secondary school aided learners in establishing routines, allocating time for studying and leisure activities, and making informed choices regarding the management of their time.

The transition from primary to secondary school has been found to be associated with personal growth, particularly when it is considered significant (Iimura & Taku, 2018). This development is often influenced by personality traits and can lead to improvements in the quality of relationships (Parker, 2012). Interventions that promote a growth mindset can help accelerate this progress and enhance academic achievement (Yeager, 2016). During this transition, family processes and self-perceptions play a crucial role in promoting positive adjustment and improvements in self-esteem (Lord, 1994).

Importance of Support

The significance of support is acknowledged in various contexts, such as relationships, the workplace, and education. In the realm of relationships, support encompasses both the perceived availability of support from others and the actual assistance received or provided by others. This includes emotional support, which involves conveying love and care to close and significant individuals, as well as fostering increased self-esteem and a sense of belonging (Allemand et al., 2015).

Nine learners emphasized the importance of support, articulating how it aided their transition during this pivotal time.

> *"Being able to rely on a good support system helped me deal with the stress and uncertainty of starting secondary school"* - Participant 2 (13 years old, Female).

This quotation underscores the considerable importance of support systems in aiding learners in navigating the arduous transition from primary school to secondary school. Participant Two accentuates the indispensability of a dependable support system in effectively handling the stress and ambiguity that accompany this period of transformation. This implies that granting learners access to supportive resources, be it from family, friends, educators, or counsellors, can have a favourable influence on their general welfare and scholastic accomplishments throughout transitions. It emphasizes the significance of cultivating robust support networks for learners as they navigate pivotal milestones in their educational journey.

> *"Supportive teachers and the school social worker played an important part in helping me overcome problems and negotiate the greater academic requirements of secondary school."*- Participant 3

This quote underscores the significant role that teachers and school support staff play in assisting learners during the challenging transition from primary school to secondary school. Participant Three recognizes the essentiality of having supportive teachers and access to a school social worker in their ability to overcome obstacles and navigate the heightened academic requirements of secondary school. It emphasizes the importance of establishing a robust support network within the educational setting to aid learners in adapting to the new academic expectations and potential difficulties they may encounter during this crucial transition period. This underscores the necessity for schools to provide

resources and support systems to effectively assist learners in adjusting to the demands of secondary school, ultimately contributing to their overall academic success and well-being.

"Supportive relationships created a sense of belonging and acceptance, making the transition to secondary school a more enjoyable experience."- Participant 4

This quote emphasizes how important it is for families to support and encourage learners as they move from primary school to secondary school. Participant Four explains how their family's unwavering support helped them through the initial challenges of adjusting to secondary school. It shows that family members play a crucial role in building a learner's resilience and determination, especially when they face difficulties. This quote highlights the importance of a strong support system at home in developing a learner's confidence, perseverance, and ability to overcome challenges. It suggests that family encouragement can greatly impact a learner's academic success and overall well-being during the critical transition to secondary school.

"My family's support and encouragement motivated me to keep trying, even when everything felt tough in the beginning." - Participant 7(12 years old, Female)

This quote underscores the paramount role that educators play in facilitating learners' transition from primary school to secondary school. Participant Seven highlights the indispensability of having an understanding and empathetic educator who acknowledges and validates their experiences during this transformative phase. This quote underlines the importance of educators who transcend the mere imparting of academic knowledge and also offer emotional support and guidance to learners as they navigate the trials associated with acclimating to a new educational milieu.

The quote implies that having a supportive educator can exert a substantial impact on a learner's transition experience and holistic well-being. It accentuates the value of teachers who demonstrate a willingness to lend an ear to learners, recognize their challenges, and provide a compassionate and empathetic presence. This quote underscores the significance of cultivating positive rapport between learners and educators, as these relationships can profoundly shape a learner's academic accomplishments and emotional fortitude amidst periods of change and adaptation.

"To have an educator who was understanding and recognized what I was going through really made a difference." - Participant 9(13 years old, Male).

This quotation highlights the essential role of social support from friends and family in facilitating learners' navigation of the transition from primary school to secondary school. Participant Nine acknowledges the significance of having a robust support network outside of the educational institution, underscoring the considerable influence that support from loved ones can wield during this period characterized by change and adaptation.

The quotation implies that the participant's capacity to cope with the challenges associated with transitioning to secondary school has been greatly dependent on the emotional support received from friends and family. It suggests that individuals who offer encouragement, reassurance, and a sense of belongingness can help mitigate feelings of isolation, anxiety, and uncertainty that frequently accompany significant life transitions.

"My friends and family were there for me, and that has helped me a lot." - Participant 12(12 years old, Male)

Participant Twelve's statement underscores the significance of social relationships in bolstering the well-being and resilience of learners amidst periods of change. It underscores the worth of a support network that offers emotional support, empathy, and a feeling of inclusion. Participant Twelve's recognition of the favourable impact of friends and family on their transition experience underscores the importance of cultivating robust relationships beyond the realm of academia to enable learners to adeptly navigate the trials associated with transitioning to a new educational institution.

"The support and compassion of my family and friends made me feel more positive and hopeful as I transitioned into secondary school" – Participant 14(Female, 13 years old)

Participant Fourteen's response underscores the pivotal role of familial and social support in facilitating a successful transition from primary school to secondary school. The participant acknowledges the influence of emotional support and compassion from loved ones in cultivating a positive and optimistic mindset during this period of change.

The participant's statement suggests that having the understanding and encouragement of family and friends has enabled them to approach the transition with hope and confidence. This indicates that a supportive network has played a vital role in shaping the participant's attitude and emotional well-being as they navigate the challenges of adapting to a new school environment.

The findings from these quotes reveal that support from teachers, family, friends, and school social workers significantly influenced the transition process for the learners. Nine out of the fifteen participants emphasized the importance of this support in aiding their personal growth during this pivotal period.

The data suggests that a strong support network positively impacted the learners' ability to navigate the challenges of transitioning to secondary school. The encouragement and guidance provided by teachers, family, friends, and social workers helped the learners gain confidence, build resilience, and adjust to the new academic and social environment. This support also fostered a sense of belonging and emotional well-being, which are critical factors in personal growth and development.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the significance of interpersonal connections and relationships in shaping the learners' experiences and promoting personal growth. The positive impact of support systems highlights the importance of social and emotional resources in facilitating successful transitions and fostering resilience in the face of change.

The transitions that eighth-grade learners undergo as they transition from primary to secondary school are multi-dimensional and must be carefully considered. The themes of personal growth, academic adaptability, and the value of support emerged as critical components in understanding this transition period. The findings emphasize the importance for educators, policymakers, and parents to recognize and address the obstacles that adolescents face during this crucial transition.

The research report provided valuable insights into the different experiences of eighth graders, shedding light on the emotional and intellectual transitions they undergo. The study contributes to a better understanding of the complexity involved in the transition from primary to secondary school by focusing on the topics of personal growth, academic adaptability, and the need for support.

Understanding the experiences of eighth-grade learners is crucial for developing effective support systems that facilitate a smooth and successful transition. Recognizing the importance of support enables educators and policymakers to better meet the learners' needs and provide the necessary resources to ensure a seamless transition.

Numerous studies have underscored the importance of support during the transition from primary to secondary school. Mac Iver et al. (2015) discovered that outreach efforts by

secondary schools to families during this crucial period can significantly impact learner achievement. Benner (2017) emphasized the significance of supportive relationships, particularly with friends and within the school setting, in overcoming the challenges of this transition. Both Barone (1991) and Ellerbrock (2015) highlighted the importance of social support, with the former recognizing it as a mediator of adjustment and the latter advocating for transition support to facilitate a responsive shift to secondary school. These findings underscore the critical role of support in facilitating a successful transition to secondary school.

Finally, this research report lays the foundation for future research and efforts aimed at enhancing the transition experience for eighth-grade learners. By understanding the importance of personal development, academic adaptation, and support, stakeholders can collaborate to create an environment that enhances the learners' overall well-being during their transition to secondary school.

The information provided in this chapter emphasizes the diverse experiences of eighth-grade learners transitioning from primary to secondary school. The themes of navigating uncertainty, social integration, academic adaptation, personal growth, and the significance of support shed light on the challenges and successes of this important transitional period.

In conclusion, the study's main findings have been given in this chapter, along with a focus on the themes that arose from the participant data analysis. The insights and experiences of the research participants have been clearly presented in this chapter. A fuller understanding of the participants' feelings and ideas has also been offered by the chapter's discussion of the quotes they provided. Overall, the findings have brought out the complexities of the study, leading to a deeper comprehension of the research question.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of the findings/results

The results of the research about the grade eight learners' transitions from primary to secondary school are covered in this chapter. The results are categorized into five main areas, each of which reflects a crucial stage in the transition process: personal growth, the importance of support, academic adaptation, social integration, and navigating uncertainty as well as the objectives which were to explore the learners' emotional experiences of moving from primary to secondary school, to explore grade eight learners' academical adjustment during the transition from primary school to secondary school, to ascertain any challenges that learners experience during their transition from primary school to secondary school and to identify potential support mechanisms that assist grade eight cope with the transition from primary school to secondary school.

Personal development, with 13 learners asserting improvements in self-awareness, identity, and overall progress. Many learners said that their attitudes and views about themselves and their skills were significantly impacted by starting secondary school. This aligns with other studies on the significant psychological and emotional changes that frequently accompany a transition to secondary education (Leal Filho et al., 2022).

The objective to identify potential support mechanisms that assist grade eight cope with the transition from primary school to secondary school was a success as support emerged as a major theme, with nine learners acknowledging the value of networks of friends, family, and instructors in facilitating a seamless transition. The results highlight the need for specialized support systems in educational institutions and highlight the value of having a strong support system in helping learners navigate the challenges and uncertainties associated with the transition process (Allemand et al., 2015).

Twelve learners reported having trouble adjusting to the rising academic demands and expectations in secondary school, highlighting academic adaptation as a major obstacle. The objective to explore grade eight learners' academical adjustment during the transition from primary school to secondary school was a success as the study achieved the intended goal in finding out how the grade eight learners were adjusting. In order to help learners successfully transition to the academic demands of secondary school, this finding

highlights the significance of targeted interventions and support systems, such as academic mentorship programs and specialized academic assistance (Shamionov et al.,2020).

Social integration appeared as an important factor, with 14 learners indicating varied degrees of success in integrating into their new secondary school setting. The findings stress the need of creating inclusive social settings in secondary schools so that learners from all backgrounds may experience a sense of belonging and acceptance, which is crucial for their general well-being and academic achievement (Bohnert, 2013).

The objective to ascertain any challenges that learners experience during their transition from primary school to secondary school was a success as it was found that navigating uncertainty was also widespread, with all 15 learners experiencing emotions of confusion and worry about their new secondary school environment. This highlights the need of interventions that provide learners with the tools and coping strategies they need to negotiate the uncertainties of the transition process, such as orientation workshops, peer support networks, and specialized counselling services.

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate the complex experiences of eighth-grade learners as they transition to secondary school, providing useful insights into the multifaceted nature of the transition process and the numerous obstacles and possibilities it brings. The findings have practical implications for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders who support learners throughout this key stage of their educational journey. The debate provides a forum for examining specific interventions and support systems to improve the transition experience and, ultimately, the general well-being and academic achievement of learners transitioning from primary to secondary school.

In being informed by Bronfenbrenner’s theory of ecological perspective the experiences of learners were shaped by their immediate environment, including interactions with family, peers, and teachers. The findings of this study suggested that the support and guidance from these microsystem influences have a significant impact on learners' ability to navigate the transition process. This highlighted the importance of strong support systems within the microsystem, including supportive family relationships, positive peer interactions, and effective teacher-learner relationships, as crucial factors in facilitating a successful transition to secondary school (Sameroff, 2009).

The ecological systems theory offered by Bronfenbrenner provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted influences on grade eight learners as they transitioned from primary school to secondary school.

On the exosystem level, research findings indicated that systemic factors such as educational policies, socio-economic conditions, and community resources can have a profound impact on the experiences of grade eight learners as they transition to secondary school. It is essential for educational institutions and policymakers to address these exosystem-level factors to create an environment conducive to successful transitions for all learners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion of the study report on the experiences of eighth-grade learners transitioning from primary to secondary school, the following recommendations can be made to help learners navigate this key stage of their educational journey:

Implement targeted support initiatives: Social support is essential for learners who are transitioning to their new environments. In order to assist learners with forming new friendships and creating a feeling of community at their new school, peer support groups, extracurricular activities, and team-building exercises might be useful strategies (Smith 2019). In order to assist learners, deal with the stress and anxiety that come with change, they can also gain from access to mental health resources and emotional support from counselling services.

According to Brown (2018), learners' academic performance, general wellbeing, and adjustment to secondary school life all increase with the implementation of a thorough transitional support system. Through addressing the diverse needs of their learners, schools may offer a supportive atmosphere that promotes growth and development throughout the transition time.

To help learners navigate the transfer process, schools could also think about creating specific support programs. To address the psychological and emotional concerns related to the transformation, these programs may make use of peer support networks, mentoring programs, and counselling services. The study indicates that learners receive important assistance throughout their transition to secondary school from teachers, family members, and peers. To guarantee that learners obtain the essential direction, inspiration, and help as

they navigate the difficulties of their new academic environment, it is imperative to strengthen and broaden these support networks.

Develop academic adaptation tactics: Schools must devise strategies to assist learners with transitioning to the more demanding curriculum of secondary school. This might entail offering more academic resources, putting in place focused academic support initiatives, and encouraging a climate of academic resiliency and persistence.

Foster inclusive social settings: Secondary schools have to make an effort to provide welcoming and inclusive social environments where learners from all backgrounds feel accepted and welcome. This may be achieved through encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion and giving learners chances to interact and work together.

Provide targeted orientation and transition programs: To prepare learners for the challenges and opportunities that secondary school brings, educational institutions should offer comprehensive orientation and transition programs. Learners may be introduced to the school the environment, academic standards, extracurricular activities, and readily available support resources as part of these programs.

Improve communication and cooperation: In order to support learners during the transition process, educators, parents, and other stakeholders must effectively communicate and collaborate. Learners can benefit from open lines of communication and cooperation.

Regularly analyse and enhance support efforts: The success of support initiatives and interventions targeted at assisting learners in transitioning to secondary school must be evaluated on a regular basis. This might involve gathering feedback from parents, teachers, and learners to assess the efficacy of assistance programs and identify areas for improvement.

By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions and stakeholders may assist to provide a supportive and empowered environment for grade eight learners as they transition from primary to secondary school. Such initiatives can improve learners' overall well-being, academic achievement, and personal development during this critical period of their education.

Conclusion

The transition from primary to secondary school is a major milestone in each learner's academic journey. This adjustment is especially difficult for eighth-grade learners in Soweto, South Africa. Socioeconomic inequities and historical injustices in Soweto produce a number of barriers and support systems that have a significant influence on children's experiences throughout this critical age. This study explored grade eight learners' real-life experiences as they reached this transitional period, including their perspectives, academic adjustments, social dynamics, and coping methods in the setting of a secondary school in Soweto.

In summary, grade eight learners confront several challenges when they transition from primary to secondary school. The themes of personal growth, academic adaptation, navigating uncertainty, social integration and the importance of support emerged as critical components in comprehending this transition time. The findings highlight the importance for educators, social workers, legislators, and parents to identify and solve the difficulties that adolescents confront during this vital transition.

This research report sheds light on the emotional and intellectual changes learners go through and offers significant insights into the various experiences of eighth graders. This study, which focuses on academic adaptation, personal growth, and the need for support, advances knowledge of the difficulties associated with the primary to secondary school transition.

It is essential to fully understand the experiences of eighth-grade learners in order to develop efficient support networks that guarantee a seamless and successful transition. Acknowledging the importance of assistance enables educators and policymakers to better address the needs of learners and provide the tools necessary for a seamless transition.

In conclusion, the present study report has established a framework for further research and endeavours focused on enhancing the transitional experience of eighth-grade learners. Understanding the significance of personal growth, academic adaptation, and importance of support, as it enables concerned parties to work together to establish a setting that enhances learners' overall well-being throughout their transition from primary to high school.

To sum up, the study's conclusions have important relevance for educational practices and policy, emphasizing the necessity of taking into account the varied experiences learners in eighth grade undergo when they transition from primary to secondary school.

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APPENDIX A Ethical Clearance

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

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

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H23/09/15**
PROJECT TITLE	Experiences of the grade eight learners in transitioning from a primary to high school settings, a case of learners at a high school in Soweto
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Miss A Jantjies
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	15 September 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved Risk Level: Low
EXPIRY DATE	07 November 2026

DATE 08 November 2023 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Professor J Watermeyer)

cc: Supervisor : Dr B Nkala-Dlamini

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

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

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

A Jantjies
Signature

11/11/23
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX B Assent Form

Experiences of grade eight learners in transitioning from primary to secondary

school settings: A case of learners at a secondary school in Soweto.

Researcher: Aphelele Jantjies

I, ……., agree that my child, ……. can participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me and my child. I understand what this study is about.

YES NO

I understand that he/she can volunteer to take part in the study.

YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded.

YES NO

I agree that direct quotations from their interview may be used by the researcher in their research report.

YES NO

I agree that their participation will remain confidential (their name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report

YES NO

I agree that other researchers may use the information they provide in their interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but their name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

YES NO

…… (name of participant's parent/guardian)

……. (Participant's/ Guardian's signature)

…… (date)

…… (signature)

…… (name of researcher seeking consent)

…… (date)

APPENDIX C Consent Form

Experiences of grade eight learners in transitioning from primary to secondary

school settings: A case of learners at a secondary school in Soweto.

Researcher: Aphelele Jantjies

I, ……., agree to take part in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about. YES NO

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study. YES NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded. YES NO

I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report/ manuscript/book chapter. YES NO

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter). YES NO

I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on. YES NO

…… (signature)

…… (name of participant)

…… (Date)

…… (Signature)

…… (Name of researcher/person seeking consent)

…… (Date)

APPENDIX D Participant Information Sheet

Experiences of grade eight learners in transitioning from primary to secondary

school settings: A case of learners at a secondary school in Soweto.

Dear Learner

My name is Aphelele Jantjies, I am a student in Master in the field of Social Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Professor Busisiwe Nkala-Dlamini. I am doing a research study about learners. The study title is Experiences of the grade eight learners in moving to secondary school settings. The aim of this study is to fully understand the challenges and difficulties that learners face in moving to secondary school.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 20 minutes. The interview will take place at the Senaoane Senior Secondary School after school with your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a computer. Only I, the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data.

During the interview I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including your experiences in the secondary school setting. The interview will be confidential. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer.

You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decided not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. Some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time. I will also organise for the school social worker by

the name of Khensani Mabuza so that you can access the services, her numbers are (0634774455). In reaching the school social worker, the learners can go to her office which is available at the school. This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the University library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

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

Yours sincerely,

Aphelele Jantjies

Researcher:

Aphelele Jantjies (2282262@students.wits.ac.za).

0641574977

Supervisor:

Prof. Busisiwe Nkala, (busisiwe.nkala-dlamini@wits.ac.za)

011 717 4483

APPENDIX E Participant Parent Information Sheet

Experiences of grade eight learners in transitioning from primary to secondary

school settings: A case of learners at a secondary school in Soweto.

Dear Parent/ Guardian

My name is Aphelele Jantjies, I am a student in Masters in the Field of Social Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Professor Busisiwe Nkala-Dlamini. I am conducting a research study about learners. The study title is Experiences of the grade eight learners in transitioning to secondary school settings.

I would like to invite your child to take part in an interview. If they decide to take part, their participation in this research study will last about 20 minutes. Before they participate, they will be required sign an assent form and a consent form will have to be signed by you. The interview will take place at the Senaoane Senior Secondary School at 15:00. With your consent, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in a computer. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data.

During the interview I will need to ask for some personal information about them, including their experiences in the secondary school setting. The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include their name or anything else that could identify them. You are you and their permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but their name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If they decide to take part in the research study, it should be because they want to volunteer. They do not have to take part. They can stop being in the study at any time. They do not have to answer any questions if they do not want to. They will not get any direct benefits if they choose to join the research study. They will not lose any services, benefits, or rights they would normally have if you decided not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost them anything. They will not be paid for being in this research study.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. Some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If this happens, I will stop the

interview and continue another time. I will also organise for the school social worker by the name of Khensani Mabuza so that they can access the services, her numbers (0634774455). This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the University library website. If they would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to them. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnonmedical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Aphelele Jantjies

Researcher Contact Details:

Aphelele Jantjies (2282262@students.wits.ac.za).

0641574977

Supervisor Contact Details:

Prof. Busisiwe Nkala, (busisiwe.nkala-dlamini@wits.ac.za)

011 717 4483

APPENDIX F Interview Guide

Experiences of the grade eight learners in transitioning from a primary to secondary school settings: A case of learners at a secondary school in Soweto.

Questions

-Can you share your experiences during the transition from primary school to secondary school?

-How did moving from primary to secondary school impact you?

- What adjustments did you make?

- What helped you make those adjustments?

- What were the challenges you experienced individually?

- How did you cope with the things you mentioned above (any advantages or possibilities)?

APPENDIX G Permission Letter

SENAOANE SECONDARY SCHOOL

1105 Umkhondo Street, Senaoane,
PO Box 51, Chiawelo
1818
Tel: 010 025 2604
Cell: 082 552 0214
Email: umkhondostreet1105@outlook.com
Emis Number: 700111260

10 August 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

This communication serves to inform you that Aphelele Jantjies has been granted permission to conduct research titled: Experiences of the Grade 8 learners in transiting to high school setting.

We believe that the outcomes of her research would benefit the school and the community as it might provide solutions to some challenges that the school is currently battling with.

Should you wish to engage the school further regarding this matter, please to not hesitate to consult the school on the above contact details.

Kind regards

Mr Nemurura T.I
Acting Deputy Principal

SENAOANE SECONDARY
1105 Umkhondo Street, Senaone
P.O. Box 51, Chiawelo, 1818
10 AUG 2023
Phone: 011 029 4223
Cell: 082 552 0214

APPENDIX H GDE APPROVAL LETTER

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**09 October 2023**
Validity of Research Approval:	**08 February 2024– 30 September 2024** **2023/468**
Name of Researcher:	**Jantjies A**
Address of Researcher:	**Senoane /Chiawelo**
Telephone Number:	**064 157 4977**
Email address:	**Apheleiejantjieas94@gmail.com**
Research Topic:	**Experiences of the grade 8 learners in transitioning to high school settings**
Name of University:	**Wits**
Type of qualification	**Masters**
Number and type of schools:	**1Secondary School**
District/s/HO	**Johannesburg 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.

09/10/2023

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:

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