

**THE LIVED-SOCIAL EXPERIENCES OF ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE  
CHILDREN REGARDING THEIR INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION FROM  
EDUCATION IN ESWATINI.**

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## DECLARATION

Under the supervision of Dr Louis Botha and Dr Yasmine Dominguez-Whitehead, I Sibili Nsibande, hereby declare that the material contained in this research report is my own original work and that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged. It is submitted to the Faculty of Humanities for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This thesis It has not previously in its entirety been submitted to any other University or examination in the interest of an academic qualification.



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Sibili Nsibande

04/09/2022

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**Date**

## ABSTRACT

The social experiences of OVC regarding their education has received a considerable interest in the international community. However, there has been dearth exploration of their social experiences with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education, especially in Eswatini. This study is an exploration of how the social experiences that OVC encounter in their daily lives impact on their inclusion or exclusion from education.

Utilizing the qualitative approach, this study engaged fifty learner participants who were doing Grade 11 (Form 4) in one high school with the highest number of OVC in Eswatini. Of the learner participants, forty-six out of the fifty learner participants identified as OVC. Furthermore, the study engaged four in-service Guidance and Counselling Teachers who were pursuing studies on inclusive education in one of the local universities in Eswatini. The four Guidance and Counselling teachers were from the four different regions of Eswatini. This means that there was one Guidance and Counselling teacher from each of the four different regions of Eswatini. Through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and a ‘message in a bottle’ (an approach whereby the participants write a letter to a friend on another ‘planet’ and inform them about the experiences of OVC), this study brought to the fore the social experiences of OVC and how they impacted on OVC inclusion or exclusion from education.

Through the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, the findings consistently showed that OVC experienced dialectical social experiences of adversity and support which resulted in a binary relationship of inclusion/exclusion from education. The findings highlighted that OVC often encountered social experiences of adversity which weakened their resilience and promoted their exclusion from education. From the findings, it transpired that OVC encountered destitution which led to their inability to access resources need for learning, health services, food and safe accommodation. The findings indicated that OVC had to navigate these adverse circumstances by performing acts of responsibility or working collaboratively with others within their communities. According to the findings, the resources offered by their teachers, members of the community, the state and members of the family enabled often counteracted the adverse situations which OVC usually experienced. The availability of these resources stimulated OVC agency such that they experienced resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing.

Further findings indicated that OVC were aware of their exclusion and were also aware of how they could be better supported such that they experience inclusion in education and in life in general. From these findings, this study makes the contribution that OVC skills and knowledge on matters that pertain to their wellbeing be harnessed and utilized as a foundation on which other intervention strategies that are geared towards ensuring OVC livelihood and inclusion are grounded.

**Keywords:** OVC, inclusion, exclusion, resilience.

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*It always seems impossible, until it is done*

Nelson Mandela

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## **GLOSSARY**

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AIDS   | Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome                               |
| B.Ed.  | Bachelor of Education  |
| COVID  | Coronavirus Disease  |
| EDSEC  | Educational Sector Policy  |
| FAO    | Food and Agriculture Organization                                |
| HIV    | Human Immunodeficiency Virus                                     |
| MoET   | Ministry of Education and Training                               |
| OVC    | Orphaned and Vulnerable Children                                 |
| PEPFAR | President's (of the US) Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief           |
| SADC   | Southern African Development Community                           |
| SCCS   | Schools as Centres for Care and Support                          |
| SSA    | Sub Saharan Africa   |
| TRC    | Truth and Reconciliation Commission                              |
| UNAIDS | United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS                             |
| UNCRC  | United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child             |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Educational Fund                       |
| WFP    | World Food Programme   |

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

### 1. Introduction

This study is about the lived social experiences of orphan and vulnerable children (OVC) and their inclusion or exclusion from education. Through this study, I explored the voices of OVC. More specifically, I examined how OVC understood their daily social experiences of inclusion or exclusion in education.

Childhood is a period whereby all children develop socially, emotionally and culturally under the protection and support of their parents. UNICEF (2005) proposes that the period of childhood is a phase whereby every child should be:

In school and at play, growing strong and confident in the love and encouragement of their family and an extended community of caring adults. It is a precious time which children should be free from fear, safe from violence and protected from abuse and exploitation (2005, n. p.).

While this may be the expectation, the death or absence of a parent in a child's life changes the way a child experiences childhood. When children lose a parent, they experience a significant sense of loss, fear and despair. Children who lose a parent or both parents, or whose parents are absent, undergo numerous challenges including a lack of resources, stigmatisation and bullying, poor school attendance and negative social development (Oyedele et al., 2016). When children experience challenges that hinder their well-being, they are likely to eventually miss out on educational opportunities (Olson, 2014). OVC therefore, unlike other children, experience childhood in a different way to that proposed by UNICEF in the above quote.

Despite the challenges they encounter as a result of the loss or absence of a parent(s), OVC do not necessarily develop negative outcomes in their lives. While the absence of a parent(s) in their lives may heighten the risk of exclusion from education and from success in general, most OVC continue with their education and proceed to achieve positive developmental outcomes in their lives (Motsa & Morojele, 2017).

This study investigated the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion within, or exclusion from education. Examining the social experiences of OVC is critical with regards

to their inclusion into education. Bringing to the fore the challenges OVC experience as a result of their adversity sheds light on how these experiences limit their inclusion into education. Conversely, looking into the experiences that reflect the ability for OVC to recover from adversity and continue with their lives is just as important in examining how OVC are included in education. This study argues that examining the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education enables a better understanding of how OVC could be included in education.

## **1.1 Background information**

The topic of OVC is not a new one in the field of education. However, in recent years, it has become a global concern due to continuous increases in the number of orphans due to wars and conflict, severe poverty, natural disasters, epidemics and mass migration (Nar, 2021). While Tadesse et al., (2014) highlighted that there were approximately 145 million children worldwide who have lost at least one parent, Nar contends that “the actual number of orphans around the world is estimated at 400 million” (2021, p. 8). According to Nar (2021), most are “invisible children” (Nar, 2021, p. 9) who because have no one to formally report on their loss, remain uncaptured officially.

Literature reflects that while there is a large number of children who are orphaned or vulnerable globally, the highest numbers of these children are in Africa. According to Nar (2021), 52 million orphans are in Africa. The significant rise in the number of orphaned and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa is attributed to HIV/AIDS related illnesses, more than any other cause (UNICEF, 2014). Although most sub-Saharan countries have made significant progress in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS, its effects can still be felt across the region. It has been observed that while significant achievements in the global response to fight the AIDS pandemic resulted in a significant decline in new infections and reduced death, HIV/AIDS continues to have negative effects on the lives of children and families worldwide (UNICEF, 2014). While efforts have been made to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan communities, those efforts have been subjected to challenges. According to the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), variables like poverty, drought, compromised supply of medication, and deep-seated socio-cultural and gender beliefs have been a setback in the fight against HIV/AIDS; hence the notable increase of OVC in the sub-Saharan region (PEPFAR, 2016).

Eswatini<sup>1</sup> (formerly known as Swaziland) like most of her Southern African Development Community (SADC) counterparts, is experiencing a notable increase in the number of OVC (the National Educational and Training Sector Policy, 2018). In 2016, the Swaziland Country Operational Plan indicated that there were 218,519 registered OVC out of 337,322 total children in Eswatini. This means that at this time, 65% of children in Eswatini are vulnerable to experiencing negative encounters including exclusion from education. From this time to 2019, WFP records that one in every four children in Eswatini has lost one or both parents. This means that in 2019, 58% of the children in the kingdom were OVC (WFP, 2019). While the observations made by WFP (2019) show a notable decrease in the number of OVC, the projection that 58% of the children in Eswatini undergo numerous challenges including a lack of resources, stigmatisation and bullying, poor school attendance and negative social development (as indicated by Oyedele et al., 2016) is a cause for concern.

While the argument above reflects a decline in the number of OVC from 2016, to 2019, UNICEF (2020), notes that the number of children living in absolute poverty has risen up to 1.2 billion due to COVID-19. Although the COVID-19 was a global pandemic, Nar (2021) notes that Africa has more countries that were hit the hardest by the effects of this pandemic. The presupposition made by this study is that, while the number of orphans has declined in Eswatini, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased vulnerability, hence more children could be undergoing significant challenges regarding their inclusion to education and to life in general.

While the above situation could be prevalent in the kingdom, in an attempt to ensure that every child experiences inclusion in education, including OVC, Eswatini has committed to international statements that advocate and support education for “all” in the country. In 1990, Eswatini signed the Education for All Declaration which was a move that advocated for all children to achieve basic education and to have all their basic needs met in school (UNESCO, 1990). Like the rest of the international community, Eswatini committed to promoting access to free basic education for all children by the year 2015. Having noted that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS contributed to the increase of OVC in the country, Eswatini incorporated the fight against HIV/AIDS as a major component of the National Plan Development (Framework for

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<sup>1</sup> I will be utilizing the name Eswatini which is now the new official name for Swaziland. However, mentions of Swaziland appear throughout when discussing policy/ government documents that refer to Swaziland, as it was formerly known.

National Development Strategy, 2013). As part of the National Development Plan, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) committed to identifying and monitoring all children who are orphaned or vulnerable, and making sure that they are supported and protected to ensure their social, emotional and cognitive development (Ministry of Education and Training in Swaziland, 2011). Furthermore, the government of Eswatini noted with concern the growing number of OVC not in school and through the MoET, has announced a school fee waiver for all OVC, as a means of promoting education for “all” (The Swaziland Education for All Review Report, 2015).

While the aforementioned government documents and policies indicate that Eswatini is committed to promoting the inclusion of OVC in education by attempting to create an environment that will be conducive and supportive to the holistic growth and development of all OVC, it seems that some OVC are unable to complete their education due to the challenges they encounter after the death or absence of a parent. The social challenges that OVC experience have an impact on the way they experience childhood and often leave them at risk of being unable to benefit from available educational opportunities (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012; Fleming, 2015). The crux of this argument is that children whose parents are absent from their lives are most likely to be excluded from education. This creates a dilemma in that the World Bank (2002) claims that education is a major instrument for social and economic development as it plays a significant role in eradicating poverty. According to the World Bank, a child who is not educated is at risk of being excluded from experiencing a better quality of life. Education therefore becomes “the window of hope” for children experiencing poverty and challenges in getting ahead in society (World Bank, 2002, p. 3). The absence of a parent may result in OVC missing out on an opportunity that could lift them out of poverty, and getting out of poverty can mean a better life for OVC.

## **1.2 The context of the study**

### **1.2.1 The location of Eswatini**

This study was conducted in Eswatini. Eswatini is a kingdom situated in a mountainous terrain in sub-Saharan Africa. The following illustration shows the location of Eswatini in Southern Africa.



**Figure 1. The geographical location of Eswatini in Southern Africa**

*Source: Maps of the world, (2018)*

Eswatini is a country which is situated between South Africa and Mozambique. Measuring an area of 17 360m<sup>2</sup>, Eswatini is said to be the smallest country in southern Africa (Armstrong et al, 2012). Eswatini is characterised by a mountainous landscape with undulating hills (FAO, 2005) which falls into four geographical regions: The Hhohho region, which forms the northern part of the country, the Manzini region which forms the centre, the Lubombo region which is the eastern part and the Shiselweni region which forms the southern part of the country (FAO, 2005).

The country’s population as projected by the latest (2019) census stands at 1,093,238 people in total (The National Development Plan, 2019). From the afore given population, poverty rate is at 59 percent with 20 percent of the people living below the extreme poverty line (National Development Plan, 2019). The rate of unemployment is above 23 percent (National Development Plan, 2019), while 80 percent of the country’s population lives on less than two US dollars a day (Armstrong et al., 2012). Although Eswatini is a mountainous and hilly topography, subsistence agriculture remains the dominant source of livelihood for most of the people in the country (Dhemba, 2018). The general population in the country relies on the

maize grown in rural areas which covers 54 percent of the country. While there seems to be much land to enable the farming of maize for sustaining the population of Eswatini, Singh et al. (2020) note that because of the lack of extensive irrigation systems and drought that often hits the country, there always is insufficient maize supply to feed the general population. The global change in climate has led to devastating outcomes in the production of rain-fed agricultural produce in Eswatini and as a result, over a quarter of the population of Eswatini is food insecure (Armstrong et al., (2012). The high levels of food insecurity in Eswatini has resulted in Eswatini relying more on the importation of maize and on food aid from international donors Singh et al. (2020).

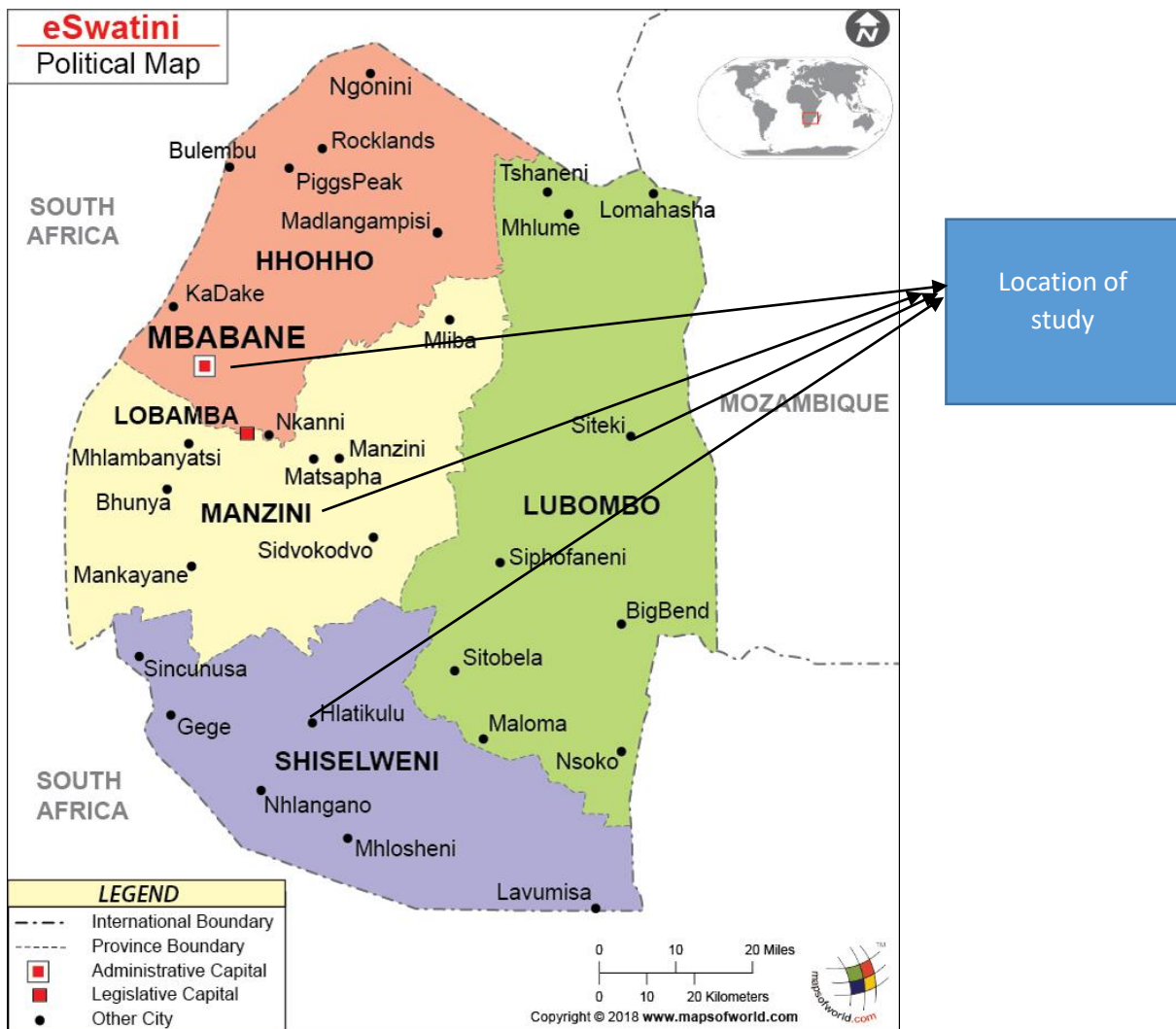
In addition to the farming of maize for subsistence use, the cultivation of sugar cane, forestry, pineapples, citrus and ranching on private land forms part of the major contribution to the economy of the country (FAO, 2005). Textiles and natural resources also form part of the small exports which bring financial injection into Eswatini (Armstrong et al., 2012).

Eswatini has been one of the sub-Saharan countries to be hit hard by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. While HIV/AIDS infection has reduced significantly in recent years, the rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Eswatini is at 27.7 percent with 34 percent of the deaths in the country being HIV/AIDS related (National Development Strategic Plan, 2019).

### **1.2.2 Location of the study**

This study was conducted in the four different regions of Eswatini. The interviews with the Guidance and Counselling teachers were conducted in four different schools within the four different regions of the Country (Manzini, Hhohho, Shiselweni and Lubombo), while the message in a bottle, questionnaires and interviews with the learner participants were conducted in one school in the rural areas of the Manzini region. The following illustration shows the four different regions and the specific areas from which data that pertains to this study was collected.

**Figure 2: Location of the study**



**Figure 2. Location of the study**

*Source: Maps of the world, (2018)*

### 1.3 The Problem Statement

The role of the parent or parents in the lives of their children can never be underestimated. The presence of a parent in a child’s life contributes considerably to ensuring that the child is able to access education. While parents play a major role in enhancing a child’s ability to acquire social skills (Moges & Weber, 2014), they also provide funding that will promote the inclusion of their children in education (Smith, 2006). The major tenet in both arguments is that parents are key role players in the social and academic development of a child. They are significant agency and resilience stimulating conduits which enable the inclusion and wellbeing of their children. Given that they experience childhood without the presence of these key people in

their lives, OVC are more likely to grapple with social experiences that might adversely impact on their ability to access education. Their agency and resilience as children is likely to be stifled and the chances of their inclusion into education and life in general minimised. Consequently, bringing to the fore and understanding the social experiences of OVC becomes paramount if they are to be included in education. Their ability to access the support they need for inclusion and wellbeing in general rests on the exploration of the social experiences they encounter in their daily lives. It is when these social experiences are brought to the fore that a background for OVC inclusion to education and to life in general could be expedited.

#### **1.4 The Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the social experiences of OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education. It was to look into how the social experiences they encounter enabled or disabled their ability as OVC to remain resilient and autonomous with regards to their inclusion into education and into life in general. The study aimed at providing insights on how inclusion or exclusion could contribute to OVC resilience and by so doing contribute to existing literature with regards to OVC social experiences and how they shape their inclusion or exclusion into education.

##### **1.4.1 Specific objectives of the study**

The study purposed to:

- i. Examine the reported everyday social experiences of OVC.
- ii. Ascertain how OVC cope with the social experiences that pertain to their inclusion or exclusion generally.
- iii. Determine the ways (if there are any) in which the social experiences of OVC influence their education.
- iv. Find out the statutory mechanisms that the government of Eswatini has put in place and how those mechanisms promote or fail to promote OVC inclusion into education.
- v. Ascertain how OVC (and others) believed the current support structures could be improved so that OVC are better supported in the worlds in which they live.

### 1.4.2 Research Question

This study sought to bring to the fore insights on the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. To develop a comprehensive understanding of the problem, the study explored the following main research question:

How do the lived-social experiences of OVC in Eswatini indicate their inclusion in, or exclusion from education?

When exploring the main research question, the following sub-questions were cogitated:

#### Sub-questions

1. What are the OVC's reported everyday social experiences?
2. How do OVC cope with the social experiences that pertain to their inclusion or exclusion generally?
3. In what ways (if any) do the social experiences of OVC influence their education?
4. What kinds of social and instructional support structures are available to OVC and how do these promote or fail to promote the inclusion of OVC in education?
5. How did OVC (and others) suggest that current support structures in school and in the community be improved as a strategy for ameliorating OVC vulnerabilities?

### 1.5 Rationale

When a child loses a parent or parents, they lose the social and financial support needed the most for their overall livelihood and development. Unlike their non-orphan peers, OVC undergo different experiences and have to overcome a multitude of distinctive challenges in order to access education (UNICEF, 2009). Additionally, children who are orphans or vulnerable, experience mammoth challenges, which may alter their lives forever (Majanga et al., 2015). When children lose their parents, they experience “profound loss, grief, anxiety, [which leads to] fear, helplessness, long term low self-esteem, learning disabilities and disturbed social behaviour” (Majanga et al., 2015, p. 156). Mwoma and Pillay (2016) add that children who undergo the above-mentioned experiences are more likely to experience exclusion in education, have most of their needs unmet, and eventually be unable to have a respectable life.

While there is a considerable amount of literature on the experiences of OVC, most research has focused on experiences of OVC in relation to disease and poverty. For example, the experiences of OVC have been investigated with respect to how they are affected by HIV/AIDS (see, for example, Mishra & Assche, 2008; Fleming, 2015; Skovdal & Daniel, 2012; USAID, 2016) and their academic achievement (see, for example, Oyedele et al., 2016). Much research has concentrated on the psychosocial experiences of OVC (see, for example, Tadesse et al., 2014; Thwala, 2013, 2021). There seems to be few studies that focus on the experiences of OVC with regards to inclusive education. In the context of inclusive education, the one study that seems to be available in Eswatini focuses on the experiences of children with special educational needs (blindness), (see, Dhemba, 2018).

Furthermore, while there is ample literature on the experiences of OVC, there seems to be limited research on OVC experiences with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education utilizing resilience as the theoretical framework. This is evidenced in studies like Mkhathshwa (2017), who while undertaking studies on experiences of children from child-headed families (a group which falls within OVC), looks at those experiences utilising gender as a theoretical lens. Additionally, Mkhathshwa (2017)'s work adopted an approach that looks at children from vulnerable settings as victims of their circumstances.

Other studies, which have utilised resilience as the theoretical framework, have done so outside the concepts of inclusion or exclusion. Studies on resilience among vulnerable learners in Eswatini (Motsa & Morojele, 2017), while utilising resilience as the theoretical framework, did not approach this study from the inclusion or exclusion perspective. Furthermore, another study which utilized resilience as a theoretical framework, only looked at resilience and coping strategies of HIV-affected children in Sub Saharan Africa (Skovdal et al., 2012). While the studies conducted by the afore-mentioned scholars had the resilience perspective, the focus was on children affected by HIV. This perspective narrows down the scope to one group of children, ignoring others who have been orphaned or made vulnerable by factors other than HIV. Equally, just like the study conducted by Motsa and Morojele (2017), the study conducted by Skovdal et al., (2012), does not focus on the inclusion or exclusion of OVC from education. This shows a gap in literature with regards to the experiences of OVC in relation to their inclusion or exclusion from education utilizing resilience as a framework. This study aims to make a contribution to addressing this shortcoming in the literature.

## **1.6 Significance of the study**

This section provides a rationalization of the study as a contribution to the area of OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education. This study could be deemed important on several theoretical and practical bases which are highlighted below.

To begin with, this study adopts ‘resilience’ as the theoretical framework within which the experiences of OVC are framed. In a world that is continuously plagued by disasters and pandemics, the number of children left without familial support is likely to increase rather than decrease (Masten, 2012). For this reason, it is imperative that researchers focus on research that will unveil pathways and mechanisms that can promote positive development for children despite the risks brought about by those disasters and pandemics. By embarking on a study which utilised a theoretical framework that aims at outlining positive developmental pathways among children who have been able to remain strong and even do well amidst hardship, this study hopes to contribute to literature that will promote understandings on how positive development amongst those children can be supported (Masten & Barnes, 2018). By bringing to the fore the structures and relationships that foreground OVC inclusion or exclusion, different stakeholders might be able to review these structures, some of which are rigid and need to be modified to be less formidable and more supportive of OVC inclusion.

Furthermore, this study will potentially be of value for researchers who have an interest in the social experiences of OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education. Given that this study has utilized qualitative methods which have revealed new understandings on issues that pertain to OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education, other researchers may utilize those findings to explore additional topics which relate to OVC experiences with regards to inclusive education. In so doing, the findings may contribute to the literature on OVC and inclusion or exclusion from education.

Additionally, this study aimed to give OVC an opportunity to voice their views on issues pertaining to their inclusion or exclusion from education. This means that while OVC had the opportunity to discuss ways in which in their communities included them, they were also able to speak up about ways in which they are excluded from the community. According to Barnes (2003), research is an empowering process in which the data that is accumulated generates knowledge which an individual can use to empower themselves. While I do not claim that the findings of this research will bring about tangible transformation in the lives of OVC, I do propose that the research findings have brought awareness and stimulated further petition for

improving the lives of OVC. Based on the premise that the study has brought to the fore the adverse experiences of OVC and how through agency-eliciting structures and processes OVC are able to remain strong and experience inclusion in education despite the hardships and challenges they experience, this study has brought to the surface how the social experiences of OVC relate to their inclusion or exclusion from education. It has also revealed by making recommendations, how OVC can be better supported such that their inclusion and wellbeing in general is enhanced.

The research also has significant implications for me as the researcher. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) observe that the journey of research may be significant to the researcher in that, the research process may activate a series of self- reflections which may lead to the researcher uncovering values and customs in the community which he or she previously took for granted. As a researcher, this study has enabled me to re-evaluate some of the practices within the community and become more aware of practices that may include or exclude OVC from education. These insights have now been included as part of the course content for the Bachelor of Education (Special and Inclusive Education Programme) at the University in which I teach in Eswatini. Findings pertaining to the inclusion and exclusion of OVC from education now form part of the content that is taught to the in-service Inclusive and Special Education students at the university. The findings are already bringing awareness to the in-service teachers on the social experiences of OVC in relation to exclusion or inclusion from education. It is hoped that the student-teachers will be able to review practices that promote exclusion or inclusion of OVC in their schools.

## **1.7 Organisation of the thesis**

This study is divided into nine chapters which are as follows:

### **Chapter 1**

Chapter One presents the introduction, the background information and the context in which the study is situated. Furthermore, this chapter presents the problem statement, the purpose of this study (which includes the specific objectives and the research questions). Lastly, the rationale and the significance of the study are also deliberated on as part of this chapter.

### **Chapter 2**

Chapter Two forms the conceptual framework for this study. In this chapter, the critical concepts of the study are defined. In addition, literature pertaining to the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion into or exclusion from education is reviewed.

### **Chapter 3**

This chapter forms the theoretical framework for the study. In this chapter the theory of resilience is discussed extensively. The historical perspectives, current developments and relevance of resilience as a theoretical framework for this study is deliberated on.

### **Chapter 4**

The fourth chapter discusses the methodology and methods employed to arrive at knowledge pertaining to the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. The choice of methods and justifications for adopting those methods are deliberated on in depth. In addition, issues of how the data pertaining to the afore-mentioned research was analysed, are brought to the fore. Ethical considerations which include issues of anonymity, confidentiality and the right for participants to withdraw from the study are also deliberated on.

### **Chapter 5**

This chapter is a presentation of the demographics and a brief introduction of the themes of the study. As part of the demographics, for the learner participants, the chapter provides information on their socio-economic status, age, and living arrangements. For the Guidance and Counselling teacher participants, the chapter highlights their education and qualifications.

### **Chapter 6**

Chapter six is an extensive presentation, discussion and analysis of findings relating to the theme of adversity. In this chapter, findings relating to the challenges and hardships that OVC experience in relation to their inclusion or exclusion from education are deliberated on.

### **Chapter 7**

This chapter provides a presentation, discussion and analysis of findings relating to the theme of responsible agency. Through the empirical data generated by individual semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and a 'message in a bottle' data collection technique, the social experiences of OVC relating to how they performed acts of responsibility which promoted their inclusion in education, are discussed. These findings, like those of adversity, are linked to literature, theory and debate in the field of inclusive education.

## **Chapter 8**

This chapter is a presentation, discussion and analysis of the findings relating to the theme of relational agency. Through the empirical data generated from the multiple methods of data collection, the social experiences of OVC with regards to how the relationships they have with others foreground their inclusion in or exclusion from education are deliberated. The findings relating to this theme (relational agency), just like that of adversity is linked to literature, theory and debate in the field of inclusive education.

## **Chapter 9**

This chapter provides the conclusions, recommendations and limitations to this study. It also shows how the questions asked by this study were answered and presents the implications for further research.

### **1.8 Summary**

This first chapter has been an introductory unit which presented some background information about OVC and the context in which this study takes place. From this chapter, it can be gathered that the study is situated within a context that is characterised by a significantly high rate of unemployment, poverty and HIV/AIDS prevalence. The economy of the country, which relies heavily on agriculture, has also been weakened by the effects of drought and the lack of resources. While Eswatini does not have the highest number of OVC, the statistics presented show an alarming number of OVC who are living under these conditions. From the background presented, it is envisaged that the experiences of OVC will be those compounded by issues of HIV/AIDS, hunger, poverty and a limited pool of support from others. In addition to the background, the purpose of the study, the rationale, and the significance of the study have also been deliberated. The research questions and objectives which guided this study were also highlighted as tools that will bring forth knowledge that will contribute to the limited research on the social experiences of OVC with regards to inclusion or exclusion from education. The subsequent chapters respond to the specific objectives of the study which includes; the literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, presentation, discussion and analysis of data, and the conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a comprehensive review of literature on the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. As part of the literature review, this chapter defines and discusses the key concepts which explain the phenomenon under investigation. In addition to reviewing the literature, in this chapter, I bring together a number of related concepts, define and discuss them as key concepts which explain the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion into or exclusion from education. The key concepts are discussed below.

##### **2.1.1 Orphans**

The term “orphan” assumes different definitions in different contexts. According to UNICEF (2017), an orphan is a child under the age of eighteen who has lost a parent or both parents as a result of any cause of death. UNAIDS (1999), on the other hand, defines an orphan as a child under the age of fifteen years of age, who has lost a mother or both parents to HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 1999 in Skinner, 2004). It is evident from the definitions given above that the term “orphan” is interpreted slightly differently by various establishments. Although the definitions may differ, there is a consensus that an orphan is a child who has experienced bereavement or the loss of at least one parent. This research adopts the definition given by UNICEF (2017) and UNAIDS (1999) that an orphan is a child below the age of eighteen who has lost one or both parents for any reason.

Within the African context, there is a general view that there is no orphan (Thwala, 2013). African communities believe that even if a child loses a parent or both parents, they do not necessarily become an orphan because they continue to have members of the extended family who take care of them (Rusakaniko et al., 2002). This claim however, is contrasted by Skinner et al. (2006) who argue that some African groups do have terms that describe orphans i.e. in Eswatini, a child who has lost one parent is called *Intsandzane* and a child who has lost both parents is referred to as *Ingedzame*. This suggests that a child who loses a parent or both parents assumes the status of an orphan. They are categorised differently from other children, even if there are other people to take care of them. It can be concluded that the term “orphan” therefore does not mean “without care and support” from others, but it is a label that is assigned to children because they have lost a parent or both parents. This study adopts the view that orphans are children who have lost one or both parents regardless of the presence of other relatives who act as guardians to the orphaned child. They are *Bantfwana bemango* (children that belong to the community) as highlighted by Dlamini (2020, p. 10). This means that while they have no parental figure to ensure their wellbeing, the community at large takes the responsibility of ensuring that they are taken care of and have access to the resources they need for their wellbeing and inclusion.

Children who lose one or both parents are most likely to be at risk of encountering numerous risky situations in their lives (Nabunya & Ssewamala, 2014). When children become orphans, they become more vulnerable to risk factors that may lead to them being deprived of their basic human rights (Fleming, 2015). The death of a parent brings about many significant changes in the lives of children. Slee (2011) observes that families are the first unit of support and security for children. The death of a parent(s) therefore means a breakdown in family and in familial support for the children; hence the increase in vulnerability. Schenk et al. (2008) however warn that while orphan-hood increases the probability of vulnerability, not every child who loses a parent or parents are vulnerable. An orphan can remain non-vulnerable if members of the family make arrangements to ensure that the child continues to have all their basic needs and rights fulfilled after the death of the child’s parent or parents. However, based on Fleming’s (2015) argument, children who have lost a parent or both parents have been viewed as vulnerable in this study.

The death of a parent or parents has a significant impact on the inclusion or exclusion of a child in education. Parents are usually the breadwinners in the family; hence they are responsible for the accumulation of wealth which is necessary for the general wellbeing of the children,

(Nabunya & Ssewamala, 2014). The death of a parent therefore may reduce the household wealth significantly. When a parent dies, basic needs like food, health and education may not be met for orphans (Nabunya & Ssewamala, 2014). This may translate to the exclusion of orphans in numerous ways. Orphans may experience exclusion from education in that some of the relatives who take them into their homes cannot afford to take them to school (Majanga et al., 2015). Additionally, some orphans are withdrawn from school by relatives who take them in so that they can turn them into labourers (Majanga et al., 2015). A study conducted by Fauk et al. (2017) indicated that some orphans in Tanzania were withdrawn from school so that they could help out in the cocoa and tobacco fields in the villages. The withdrawal of orphans from school often leads to an increased number of “dropouts” from school (Kaljee et al., 2017). When orphans are removed from school, they experience exclusion from education. From the afore-mentioned argument, it can be deduced that the absence of a parent affects the inclusion of an orphan in education.

Furthermore, the lack of parental love and attention often promotes negative behavioural changes in the lives of orphans (Majanga et al., 2015). When some children lose a parent, they begin to exhibit patterns of aggression, especially when they are teased by other children (Majanga et al., 2015). Additionally, the social experiences that orphans encounter often impact on their academic and social inclusion in school. The aggressive and attention seeking behaviours often get orphans into trouble whereby punishment that sometimes excludes them from learning is emitted. Additionally, orphans who exhibit aggressive behaviour are often excluded from social activities by other pupils and by the community in general (Majanga et al., 2017). Consequently, the death of a parent(s) may result in academic and social exclusion for orphans.

### **2.1.2 Vulnerable Children**

The term “vulnerable” children also seems to lack an international definition. It is a concept that is characterised by fluidity, making it more relative and contextual (Arora et al., 2015). Datta (2009) defines a vulnerable child as one who lives in a highly endangered setting, while Arora et al. (2015) define a vulnerable child as one who experiences material, emotional and social deficits such that their basic rights are not fulfilled.

While orphan-hood is distinctly a case that results from a child losing a parent or both parents, vulnerability is prompted by various aspects. Due to the lack of a specific definition of

vulnerability, children from various groups have been considered in this study to be vulnerable. The different groups of children who are considered to be vulnerable are discussed below.

### **2.1.3 Children from child-headed households (CHH)**

Rusakaniko et al. (2002) define a child-headed household as a household in which the day to day decisions of the group or persons living together are executed by a person aged eighteen and below. When parents die, divorce or migrate to other cities in search of better-paying jobs, the responsibility to head the family often falls on the grandparents (Fauk et al., 2017). Where there are no grandparents, the older children often assume the responsibility of parenthood to their younger siblings and this brings numerous social changes in the lives of the children (Fauk et al., 2017). The changes that take place put all the children in that household at risk of being excluded from education. Children who head families, especially girls are at greater risk of abuse and exploitation as they try to find provisions for their younger siblings (Abashula et al., 2014). This view is supported by the findings made by Thwala (2021) who discovered that in Eswatini, OVC from child-headed families did not receive support from the chiefs (who by virtue of their positions as the community administrators are custodians for OVC). According to Thwala (2021), fields which were to be used by OVC to cultivate food for their sustenance were taken by the Chief and given to other people rather than OVC. Other studies revealed that younger children are also at risk of not having their basic needs met, including education. This finding contrast Dlamini (2020) who projects that OVC in Eswatini are Bantfwana be Ndlunkhulu (the Chief's children). These findings reveal that, rather than ensuring the wellbeing of OVC, some Chiefs are at the helm of their exclusion. By taking resources that are meant for OVC livelihood and giving them to others, the Chief deprives OVC of the resources they need to access food and other forms of income which they could have retrieved through the fields. Furthermore, Nabunya and Ssewamala (2014) note that because of the increase in household responsibilities, children whose parents are absent have to grow up and mature faster than they would have if their parents were present; hence exclusion from social activities enjoyed by children of their age. From the afore-mentioned argument, it can be said that the absence of a parent may increase the chances of vulnerability to exclusion in education for the child. Consequently, children who head families have been viewed as vulnerable in this study.

#### **2.1.4 Children affected by HIV/ AIDS**

Children who are affected by HIV/AIDS are also vulnerable to exclusion from education. While significant strides have been taken to alleviate the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS globally, children seem to experience the brunt of this pandemic more than others (Majanga et al., 2015). Skovdal and Daniel (2012) observe that the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS has pushed children into the forefront where they often take on the role of caring for and nursing sick parents or siblings while juggling the responsibility of sustaining the household as well. These additional social roles that children assume at home are most likely to put them at risk of being excluded from education. The chances of absenteeism from school may increase as they tend to their ailing parent. Additionally, children whose parents fall sick due to HIV/AIDS related illness are at risk of experiencing stigmatization by peers, members of the extended family and the community (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012). For this reason, children whose parents are sick and those who sometimes have to take care of their parents are considered to be vulnerable to exclusion from education in this study.

Additionally, children who are infected by HIV or who fall sick due to AIDS, are also vulnerable to exclusion from education. While schools are expected to be places of safety where children are protected from discrimination and prejudice (UNESCO,1994), children who are HIV positive or fall sick due to AIDS related illness often encounter stigma and bullying (Campbell et al., 2016). Furthermore, children who are infected by HIV have lower motor, cognitive and adaptive skills compared to children who are uninfected (Levy et al., 2014). This means that children who are infected with HIV are more vulnerable to educational exclusion if the appropriate measures to support them are not taken. Consequently, the numerous aspects of HIV/AIDS combine to promote vulnerability to exclusion from education to the children who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

#### **2.1.5 Children living with disabilities**

Children with disabilities have been identified as one group that is vulnerable to experience exclusion from education (Kuper et al., 2014). Marcy et al. (2014) note that 90 percent of children with disabilities in countries of the Global South do not attend schools. Children with severe intellectual and physical disabilities are at a higher risk of not attending school when compared to children with mild to moderate disabilities (Kuper et al., 2014). Be that as it may,

Kuper et al., (2014) notes that while children with mild to moderate disabilities may attend school, the quality of their educational experiences do not fulfil their educational potential.

Children with disabilities experience significant barriers which prevent them from accessing education. These barriers include parental attitudes, physical barriers and attitudes from teachers and non-disabled peers in schools (Bakashi, et al, 2017). Parents of children living with disabilities often withhold their children from accessing education because they fear the stigmatisation their children may experience in school (Bakashi et al., 2017). Sometimes, parents refrain from sending their children to school because of lack of resources such as transportation services for their children with disabilities (Bakashi et al., 2017).

Furthermore, orphaned children with disabilities are less likely to receive the required care and support when compared to their non-orphaned peers or orphaned but non-disabled peers (Marcy et al., 2014). While there have been significant strides taken by national and international organisations to support OVC (especially in the HIV pandemic), the interventions have not included children with disabilities as target groups (Marcy et al., 2014). The lack of support specifically channelled to them makes OVC with disabilities more vulnerable to exclusion from education than most of their peers. Bakashi et al. (2017) conclude that children with disabilities face the “highest injustice” (2017, p. 10) with regards to educational attainment.

### **2.1.6 Parental lack of Cultural Capital**

Inclusive education calls for the involvement of parents and the entire community in the education of children (UNESCO, 1994). High parental involvement in their children’s education yields better learning outcomes for the child (Modisaotsile, 2012). The level of parental involvement in their child’s education is usually influenced by the cultural capital which parents have (Sullivan, 2007). When parents lack the kinds of cultural capital that is valued by the school or educational system, their children are more likely to be excluded from education (Sullivan, 2007). From this argument, this study argues that parents who do not make an effort to support the education of their children place those children at risk of exclusion. Parents who do not provide resources such as time to visit the school to make a follow-up on their child’s academic progress or parents who do not buy their children school required items, put their children at risk of experiencing exclusion from education. The afore-given discussion suggests that while vulnerability is associated with the absence of a parent, the presence of a parent whose values are not aligned to educational attainment places the child at risk of being

excluded from education. For this reason, children whose parents or guardians are unable to participate in their education, have been considered to be vulnerable to exclusion from education.

### **2.1.7 OVC**

The term OVC has its foundations in the HIV/AIDS context. Skinner explains that the term ‘OVC’ was proposed because of the “limited usefulness of the tight definition of the construct of orphan-hood in the scenario of HIV/AIDS” (2004, p. 1). In the wake of HIV/AIDS, the term OVC seemed to be one that could be more inclusive of all children who were left destitute by the effects of HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, 2015). While the term OVC is used world-wide, there is no implicit definition or clear statement of who gets to be included or excluded in this category, (Skinner, 2004). For this reason, the term OVC is defined differently in different circumstances.

In this study, the term OVC is used to refer to children who have lost one or both parents as a result of HIV/AIDS or any other reason. It is also used to refer to children whose parents are absent from their lives on work-related issues, divorce or some other form of family dysfunctionality and as a result live in endangered settings such as living with elderly guardians such as grandparents, child-headed household or on the streets. Furthermore, the term ‘OVC’ in this study is used to refer to children who are HIV positive, suffer from AIDS related illnesses or live with a parent who suffers from an HIV/AIDS related illness. These are the children who encounter numerous challenges including marginalization as a result of the HIV/AIDS related situations.

This study also views OVC as children whose lives are characterised by significant destitution as a result of the situations highlighted above. These are the children who due to the lack of familial support, experience increased levels of poverty and struggle to access the resources needed to sustain their educational and social needs. They often encounter experiences of educational and social relegation because of their inability to acquire the resources needed to ‘fit’ into the educational or social environment in their communities.

OVC in this study also refers to the group of children whose welfare is overseen by the state. In this study the children whom the community of Eswatini refers to as “Bantswana bendlunkhulu/” translated to “the children whose welfare is overseen by the community Chiefs in Eswatini” (Dlamini, 2020), are considered to be OVC. Bantswana bendlunkhulu are those children who through the Deputy Prime Minister’s office receive educational and social

support. These are the children for whom the state in collaboration with international organisations, often pays school fees, supply with school uniforms and bring food parcels to them in their constituencies through the Chief who is the traditional administrator of that constituency.

Although the definitions of OVC discussed above seem to generate the viewpoint that OVC are children who are characterised by vulnerability, hardship and numerous negative experiences, this study also considers OVC to be the children who are able to remain strong and experience positive outcomes despite the adversity they encounter. These are the children who amidst the challenges they encounter, are able to show autonomy and strength by acting in a manner that will enable their inclusion and wellbeing in general. The term OVC in this study therefore not only speaks of vulnerable and at risk children, but it also refers to children who, while experiencing hardship, harness the resources available to them to achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

I have decided to focus on OVC for the purposes of this study and not on orphans or vulnerable children as separate categories because of the overlap between the two concepts and the experiences of both groups (orphaned children and vulnerable children). I have noted that some theorists use the terms “vulnerability” and “orphan-hood” interchangeably (see for example, Abashula et al., 2014). Choosing one category over the other might have prevented me from accessing more literature as some literature seems to discuss both vulnerability and orphan-hood simultaneously.

## **2.2 Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education is a concept that is defined differently by different scholars in different circumstances (Armstrong et al., 2011). Although inclusive education seems to lack an official definition, this study adopts the definition that inclusive education is a philosophy which operates within a framework of human rights and entitlements, and has its roots in social justice. It is a strategy in which every child’s right to education will be respected (UNESCO, 1994). Additionally, inclusive education promotes the view that every child’s needs should be supported in a welcoming, non-discriminatory and safe environment (UNESCO, 1994). This definition speaks not only to the educational attainment for all children, but it also accentuates the social well-being of all children. It highlights inclusive education as a process through which social injustices can be contested (Armstrong et al, 2011). Furthermore, it acknowledges

that the educational success of children rests not only on them coming to school and being inside the classroom, but also on ensuring that the environment is supportive towards their needs.

Although it is defined differently by different scholars, (Miles & Singal, 2010; Armstrong et al., 2011; Slee, 2011), inclusive education is generally understood to be a process that promotes the accommodation of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms. It is a movement that originally ensued as a protest against special education (Slee, 2011). It challenged the existence of two separate educational systems that catered for children with “special needs” and the “regular child” (Armstrong et al., 2011). While this was a significant movement from the medical model of disability to a more social model, this prospect portrayed inclusive education to be an undertaking that only promoted the inclusion of children with physical disabilities in mainstream schools; thus neglecting other marginalised groups.

The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) has brought about a significant change in the way inclusive education has been defined. According to Vislie (2003), the Salamanca Statement has presented a global shift from the narrow definition of inclusive education to a broader one. Inclusive education after the Salamanca Conference became a drive that advocated for the inclusion of all children regardless of ability, disability, race, gender, religion or socio-economic background (UNESCO, 1994). This broader view of inclusive education promotes the inclusion of all children in schools in their neighbourhood.

Based on the articulations of the Salamanca Statement, inclusive education may be defined as a philosophy which operates within a framework of human rights and entitlements, and has its roots in social justice. It is a strategy in which every child’s right to education will be respected (UNESCO, 1994). Additionally, inclusive education promotes the view that every child’s needs should be supported in a welcoming, non-discriminatory and safe environment (UNESCO, 1994). This definition speaks not only to the educational attainment for all children, but it also accentuates the social well-being of the child as a critical component in educational achievement.

Inclusive education is not only concerned with what happens within the classroom, but transcends to the communities in which children live. Through inclusive education, societies are given an opportunity to investigate their social institutions and structures (Miles & Singal, 2010). Inclusive education therefore is a philosophy that concerns itself with ensuring the collaboration of all the stakeholders in the community to promote the wellbeing of all children.

As part of inclusive education, the Salamanca Statement advocates for the participation of parents and other members of the community in the education of all children (UNESCO, 1994). Consequently, inclusive education is not only about getting all children into school and having them acquire an education, but it is also about ensuring that communities play their role in ensuring the inclusion of all children in education.

Inclusive education has been endorsed and ratified by international organisations as a legal movement to ensure that all children access education. It is a human-rights movement that is strongly advocated for by the United Nations; UNESCO; the World Bank; and the United Kingdom's Department of International Development (Armstrong et al., 2011). As a concept, inclusive education is backed up by international policies which provide a framework through which national policies pertaining to the education of all children are grounded. The plethora of policies serve as a legal framework that ensures consistency, accountability and responsibility from all member states. The following sub-section discusses the international policies which support inclusive education as a basic human right for all children including OVC.

### **2.2.1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**

The right to education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which stipulates that everyone has a right to free and basic education. This declaration forms the foundation on which inclusive education is based. Inclusive education is all about ensuring that the rights of children in areas that pertain to their education are respected. While the absence of the parent(s) in the lives of OVC may compromise the right for every child to receive an education, all states that are signatories to this declaration are required to ensure that OVC are provided with free basic education.

### **2.2.2 The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)**

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) establishes that all human rights apply to children without exception. The Convention of the Rights of the Child reiterates that the state has an obligation to ensure that all children receive a primary education. It further adds that all children are to be protected from any form of discrimination. From the contents of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, it can be gathered that each state has an obligation to ensure that all OVC attend primary school and are included in learning. Additionally, it can

also be inferred that all states have a responsibility to ensure that OVC are not subjected to maltreatment in school and in their communities because of their status as OVC.

### **2.2.3 The Jomtein Declaration on Education for All (1990)**

The Jomtein Declaration on Educational for All (1990) reaffirmed the right to education for all. It further emphasised the importance of ensuring that the basic learning needs for all children be met. The Jomtein Declaration on Education for All, also advocates for the removal of disparities that may hinder learning for marginalised groups including OVC. It proposes that marginalised populations such as OVC be provided with additional support in order to enhance the development of their writing and numeracy skills.

Furthermore, the Jomtein Declaration on Education for All advocates that the learning environment be enhanced so that all learners achieve more substantial and all-encompassing results. This means that states should ensure that the learning environment provides general physical and emotional support so that all children participate actively in and benefit from education. Issues of nutrition and health should be paid attention to so that children from underserved groups such as OVC are able to participate in learning (The Jomtein Declaration on Education for All, 1990).

### **2.2.4 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1992)**

Like the other policies discussed above, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) declares education as one of the basic rights for every child irrespective of whom they are or where they come from (UNCRC, 1992). The emphasis on the right to education for all children shows how education is viewed as one of the most critical needs for children.

Furthermore, UNCRC (1992) declares that every child has the right to know and be cared for by their parents. When OVC lose a parent or both parents, their right to be cared for by a parent is taken away from them. This means the role that parents play in the life of their child is known to be critical in the development of a child. From the statutes of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, it is evident that the absence of a parent from their child's life might eventually lead to a number of the child's rights not being respected.

### **2.2.5 The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (UNESCO 1994)**

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) is viewed as the founding international policy for inclusive education. Like all the above discussed international policies, the Salamanca Statement reaffirms the right to education for every person regardless of individual differences (UNESCO, 1994). According to the Salamanca Statement “Every child has the fundamental right to education, and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning” (UNESCO, 1994, p. viii). Additionally, the Salamanca Statement stipulates that educational programmes should be designed and implemented to take into consideration the diverse needs of all children. From the argument given above, it is evident that the Salamanca Statement (1994) broadened the view of inclusive education. Inclusive education is now portrayed as a movement that not only focuses on the bringing in of children with physical disabilities and special educational needs to the regular school, but also as a development that encompasses a wider continuum of marginalised individuals such as OVC (Naidoo, 2015). This means that for the rights of marginalised groups like OVC to education to be realised, schools should put in place programmes which will support them such that they are able to access learning. Schools should therefore become inclusionary spaces where OVC are welcomed and receive the necessary support to attain an effective education (UNESCO, 1994).

### **2.3 The challenges of inclusive education**

As discussed in earlier sections, inclusive education has been endorsed and ratified by international organisations. It is strongly advocated for by the United Nations; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; the World Bank; and the United Kingdom’s Department of International Development (Armstrong et al., 2011). Despite that it has been endorsed by international organisations, as indicated above, inclusive education does not have an official definition; hence, the numerous definitions which have led to multiple different perspectives of inclusive education.

The multiple definitions, have led to extensive contestation of inclusive education. While it may mean one thing to theorists and practitioners in countries of the Global North, inclusive education means something different in countries of the Global South (Armstrong, et al. 2011). Although inclusive education in countries of the Global North concerns itself with ensuring that there is order and control on student’s behaviour in regular classrooms, in countries of the

Global South inclusive education means an attempt to ensure that all children get to school, and achieve an education by accessing the already limited resources within the schools (Armstrong et al. 2011). Additionally, inclusive education has been contested because not everyone shares the view that all children can learn together despite their differences (Florian, 2015). Furthermore, where there is consensus to have all children learn together, there is often debate and disagreement on issues of methodology that could ensure that all the children participate and succeed in school (Warnock & Norwich, 2010 as cited in Florian, 2015). From the afore-given discussion, it is evident that inclusive education is not fully embraced as a philosophy that can eradicate social injustices experienced by children from marginalised groups in society.

Furthermore, inclusive education has been contested for the political agenda assumed to be behind it. Inclusive education has been perceived as an idea that continues to promote the practices of colonialism whereby countries of the Global North impose their knowledge and policies on countries of the Global South (Armstrong et al, 2011). While inclusive education inaugurates with the recognition of unequal social relations that generate exclusion (Slee, 2011), the continuous loans to African countries as they try to keep up with the demands of implementing inclusive education, continue to tighten the grip of the debt shackles that tie African countries to the Western countries (Slee, 2011). In this way, inclusive education becomes one of the many movements that increase African debt and dependency on other countries, reducing chances of Africa ever becoming financially free from international debt.

Additionally, while it is said to be a move towards ensuring that all children are included in learning, inclusive education has been criticised for its nature to exclude as it includes. Liasidou (2012) argues that children who are perceived to be different are still significantly marginalised and excluded in schools that are allegedly to be inclusive. Liasidou (2012) notes how schools in an attempt to align to the dictates of inclusive education, bring in children perceived to be different into an environment that develops special educational intervention strategies that will respond to the children's right to education rather than tackling and eradicating the impediments to learning and participation which are problematic in the curriculum. This results in exclusionary inclusion (Liasidou, 2012), whereby children with disabilities or those who come from marginalised backgrounds such as OVC, are brought into an environment where they have to consistently navigate the barriers that threaten their inclusion in education.

One of the major controversies surrounding inclusive education emanates from it (inclusive education) being coupled with special education. While inclusive education is a concept that was generated as a movement that fights against the principles of special education, which were promoting the segregation and exclusion of children with disabilities, it continues to be spoken of interchangeably with special education. The successful implementation of inclusive education depends on it being decoupled from special education (Slee, 2011). Slee argues that inclusive education is continuously “grafted into special education books [at] institutions of higher education in the UK [and in other parts of the world] offering Master of Inclusive and Special Education [degrees]” (2011, p. 91). Slee’s observation suggests that inclusive education and special education continue to be understood as similar concepts. This can have dire consequences for the success of inclusive education, because exclusionary practices of special education might find their way into regular classrooms as ‘inclusionary’ practices.

In addition to inclusive education and special education being seen synonymously, the notion of inclusive education being generally perceived as an act of including children with physical disabilities in the mainstream schools creates practices that might promote the exclusion of OVC in education. For the fact that other groups such as OVC fall into the broader category of marginalised groups, they may not be viewed as a group that is vulnerable to exclusion. Subsequently, OVC in schools may remain unsupported, a situation which may lead to practices such as “subliminal exclusion” (Meltz et al., 2014, p. 6) where children with additional needs are put into regular schools with no form of support put in place for them.

The language used within the context of inclusive education has also contributed to the slow realisation of inclusive education in schools. The different words used to describe inclusive education has contributed to the lack of success in the implementation of inclusive education (Walton & Lloyd, 2011). Words that describe inclusive education as a “process” for instance, imply that the implementation of inclusive education is continuous and never ending because inclusive education is a journey not a destination (Walton & Lloyd, 2011). The use of such expressions removes the sense of urgency in ensuring the success of inclusive education. It becomes acceptable that education is moving along the path of inclusion, and that is enough. Language therefore “may delay the implementation of inclusive education [because] they structure the way we think and the way we act, and our systems of knowledge and belief, in a pervasive and fundamental way” (Fairclough, 1992 in Walton & Lloyd, 2011, pp. 1 & 7). Therefore, the words used to refer to inclusive education will influence the way inclusive education is perceived and the actions taken towards its implementation.

Inclusive education has also received reproach for its uneconomical nature, especially in the countries of the South (Graham & Slee, 2005). While the Salamanca Statement (1994) envisioned inclusive education as a cost-effective approach that would relieve local governments of the economic strain of running two separate systems of education (the regular and special education system), Walton (2011) juxtaposes that inclusive education is a resource-intensive undertaking for developing countries. According to Walton, the absence of needed resources like school counsellors, textbooks, food and stationery to support all children including OVC means that inclusive education for some countries remains impractical. The lack of basic resources such as electricity, appropriate toilets, books and human resources in schools is an indication that countries of the Global South might not experience inclusive education as a cost-effective commission, hence inclusive education remains a mirage for most developing countries.

While authors have previously highlighted that one of the significant dilemmas of inclusive education was the negative attitudes that teachers have towards inclusive education (De Boer et al., 2011; Sarfo, 2011; Walton, 2011), current literature notes that there has been a general shift regarding teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. According to Singh et al. (2020), the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education are now moderate to favourable. Sing et al. (2020) also makes the observation that teachers who have inclusive education incorporated into their teacher-training are more positive towards inclusive education than in-service teachers who have not had any training at tertiary level on inclusive education. From this observation, it is evident that while there has been a shift towards embracing inclusive education, there still are some teachers out there who are not amenable to inclusive education. Evidently, the dilemma of inclusive education in relation to teacher attitudes is still one that has to be considered.

## **2.4 Inclusive Education in Eswatini**

The Swaziland Education and Training Sector Policy (EDSEC) defines inclusive education as an approach that “meets the needs of all learners- whatever their gender, life circumstances, state of health, disability, stage of development, capacity to learn, level of achievement, financial or any other circumstance” (2011, p. 160). Given the above definition, inclusive education in Eswatini is about ensuring that all children are welcomed and supported in schools.

In line with the international community, Eswatini like other sub-Saharan countries formally adopted inclusive education practice in 2008 (Swaziland Education for All Review Report, 2015). Prior to 2011, issues of education and training in the country were addressed through the 1999 Draft Education Policy which never graduated into actual policy; hence the irregularities and inability to ensure that issues of inclusion were fully addressed in Eswatini. However, in 2011, EDSEC was enacted as the first consolidated policy document to address all issues related to education and training in Eswatini. The main objective for this sector policy was to ensure that the government of Eswatini through the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) provides an “equitable and inclusive education system that affords all learners access to free and basic education and Senior Secondary education of real quality, followed by the opportunity to continue with life-long education and training” (EDSEC, 2011, p. 9). The policies set up as a strategy to support the implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini are discussed below.

#### **2.4.1 The Inclusive Education Policy**

In a bid to ensure that all children are included in education, the MoET in Eswatini formulated the Inclusive Education Policy as a way of ensuring that every child is enrolled and accepted in a school within his or her community irrespective of disability, impairment, gender, life circumstance or level of achievement (EDSEC Policy, 2011). This policy advocates that all children be supported by providing the necessary resources needed and removing attitudinal and physical barriers which may hinder the inclusion of all children in education (EDSEC, 2011).

According to the Inclusive Education Policy, every child in the country should be enrolled in a school near where he or she lives (EDSEC, 2011). In addition, the policy stipulates that no child shall be denied access to education on the basis of his or her disability, religion, or socio-economic background (EDSEC, 2011). Through this policy, the government of Eswatini commits to providing sufficient financial, physical and other forms of resources to ensure that all children are able to access education. Additionally, the government of Eswatini through the Inclusive Education Policy, committed to the development and facilitation of capacity building programmes for teachers so that they are able to support all children in school (EDSEC, 2011).

### **2.4.2 Schools as Centres for Care and Support (SCCS) Policy**

As part of the inclusive education approach, the MoET in Eswatini through the SCC Policy, has declared schools as centres of care and support. The SCCS Policy is an inclusive strategy that aims to “promote healthy, protective and secure environments, accommodating all learners, thus acting in the interests of the ‘whole’ child” (EDSEC, 2011, p. 14). Central to the SCCS policy is to ensure that all children in schools have access to clean water and sanitation, receive psychosocial support when necessary, enjoy safety and protection from any physical harm that might be a threat to their learning and have at least one meal a day at the school. This move has been influenced by the contents of the Salamanca Statement (1994) which decree that local governments provide the necessary resources to ensure inclusion in schools.

### **2.4.3 The Primary Education Policy**

The Constitution of Swaziland (2005), declares that education is a right for every child in Eswatini. In an attempt to ensure that this right is respected, Eswatini committed to ensuring that every child attains basic education by introducing free and compulsory primary education as a way of ensuring that all children, especially those from low-socio economic backgrounds and OVC are included in education (UNESCO, 2015). The Free Primary Education Policy which was introduced in 2010, was part of a wider context that aimed at “providing an equitable and inclusive education system that affords all Swazi children access to free primary education of real quality, followed by opportunities of life-long education and training” (UNESCO, 2015, p. 6). Additionally, the Primary Education Policy stipulates that as a strategy to promote inclusive education, the government of Eswatini would ensure that all school facilities including play grounds and classrooms are user friendly to all learners, including those with disabilities (EDSEC, 2011). Furthermore, the MoET pledged to ensure that every learner in primary school receives stationary and texts books from the government so that parents pay minimal extra costs for the education of their children. The aforementioned interventions have been a significant attempt by the government of Eswatini to promote the inclusion of all children in basic education.

### **2.4.4 The OVC Policy**

The notable increase in OVC in the country (EDSEC, 2011), prompted the government of Eswatini through the MoET to enact a policy that would ensure that OVC access education despite the socio-economic challenges they might experience as a result of a lack of familial

support that they may encounter. Key to the OVC Policy is to ensure that all OVC are enrolled, retained and supported while in school so that they complete their education (EDSEC, 2011). While this may be the case, the World bank (2021) highlights that 22,000 children in Eswatini (including OVC) between the ages of fifteen to nineteen, are out of school. This implies that while the government aims to keep all OVC in school and ensure that they complete their education, this objective remains underachieved.

## **2.5 The challenges of inclusive education in Eswatini**

Although the policies discussed in the preceding subsection have been set up to ensure that OVC access and complete their education, the implementation of inclusive education is a slow and difficult process. This section will discuss the challenges and contestations that plague the implementation of inclusive education in Eswatini.

### **2.5.1 The coupling of inclusive and special education**

The coupling of inclusive education and special education in Eswatini is one of the major setbacks in implementing inclusive education. Inclusive education in Eswatini continues to be coupled with special education, hence creating a binary relationship that continues to enable special education and inclusive education to be used synonymously. According to Slee (2011) a union between inclusive and special education is impossible because of the two different perspectives that each advocates. However, the Swaziland National Report (2008) indicates that “special schools will continue to cater for all the severe cases, keeping in mind that they are fully equipped and have all the necessary facilities and qualified staff to offer support in the most professional manner” (2008, p. 18). The aforesaid argument strongly presupposes that special education schools are not going anywhere anytime soon. The argument implies that the separation of some learners from others through special schools is under the guise that special schools have all the necessary equipment and teachers who are well-qualified to teach learners with disabilities. This statement already predicts that regular schools will not have the necessary equipment or qualified teachers to support all the learners. Consequently, the coupling of inclusive and special education promotes the implementation of both inclusive and special practices in schools which eventually hinders the process of inclusive education.

Additionally, the coupling of inclusive and special education is evident in the newly formulated course of ‘Special and Inclusive’ education in the local universities, for example at Southern Africa Nazarene University. The university, in a bid to train primary and high school teachers

on how to be more supportive towards all learners in schools, has introduced a pre-service course on special and inclusive education for the Primary Teacher's Diploma and an in-service course for the Bachelor of Education part-time students. While the introduction of a course that provides inclusive education training for teachers has been a move to promote the implementation of inclusive education in schools, the language used has promoted a union between inclusive and special education to which Slee (2011) proposes a decoupling if inclusive education is to succeed.

The coupling of inclusive and special education may hinder the inclusion of OVC in education in a number of ways. OVC experiencing learning and behavioural disabilities as a result of the psychosocial challenges they encounter, may be referred to special schools. The binary relationship between special and inclusive education may also promote special education practices such as the pull-out system in schools. OVC whose academic performance does not meet the expected standards in the school may be withdrawn from class as a form of providing additional support for them (Florian, 2015).

### **2.5.2 Lack of resources**

A study conducted by Zwane and Malale (2018) revealed that there was a significant lack of resources in the public schools in Eswatini. These authors make the observation that schools lacked basic resources like books and furniture, and also assistive devices which made the implementation of inclusive education challenging. Furthermore, these authors note that while the introduction of free primary education was encouraging to all children who had dropped out of school because of the lack of finances to pay for their fees, the high numbers in the classrooms have become a barrier to the implementation of inclusive education (Zwane & Malale, 2018).

Additionally, overcrowded classrooms may promote the exclusion of OVC in education. When there are too many learners in the classroom, teachers may not be able to support OVC who lag behind their school work because of additional responsibilities they might have at home. Furthermore, the inability of teachers to develop a close relationship with the learners due to the large numbers of learners in the classrooms, may result in OVC being unable to share their experiences with the teachers; subsequently, they may not be able to receive the necessary support to ensure their inclusion in education. This view is supported by Zwane and Malale (2018) who highlight that the high enrolment of learners in the classrooms makes it difficult

for teachers to develop a close relationship with the learners; hence support that could be offered to learners who need it is limited.

Furthermore, the lack of devices such as braille machines, magnifying lenses and other assistive technologies and resources make it difficult for children with special educational needs to be supported. Also, the absence of human resources such as professional therapists to support children's psychological needs makes it difficult for children like OVC to be supported. In the same way, the lack of resources such as stationery, text-books, chalk or finances to buy other items such as firewood to cook meals for the learners, significantly shape the philosophical and material conditions for including OVC in education in Eswatini. While the government of Eswatini has decreed free and compulsory education for OVC, the delays in payment for OVC from government and the insufficient amounts of money that the government pays for each OVC, compels the schools to charge top-up fees from the learners (UNESCO, 2015). OVC who rely on the government for full sponsorship for school fees and other additional school necessities often have to leave school in search of additional funds from relatives. This results in the exclusion of OVC from learning and succeeding in education.

### **2.5.3 Lack of teacher training in inclusive education**

The introduction of inclusive education requires a shift not only in the way teachers perceive disability, but also in their teaching methods. Teacher competencies are a pivotal feature of teaching and learning (Thwala & Makoelle, 2022). While teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education in Eswatini remain positive, the lack of training in matters of inclusion makes teachers feel incompetent and unable to support learners with additional needs in their classrooms (Motsa & Morojele, 2019). The aforementioned argument implies that while the inclusive education policy has been adopted, teachers still lack the necessary teaching skills and repertoires of practice, and as a result the success of inclusive education remains a challenge in Eswatini.

The lack of teacher training in inclusive education may also promote the exclusion of OVC from education. Teachers who are not trained in inclusive education often feel incompetent in supporting children with additional needs including OVC (Ogina, 2010). Additionally, teachers who have not undergone inclusive training usually view diversity in the classroom as a problem and perceive children who need additional support as a burden to them (Ogina, 2010). OVC may experience exclusion in this regard because the negative social experiences they encounter often require psychosocial support from the teachers. If teachers are not trained on how to

provide psychosocial support, the schools cease to be safe spaces and become places that promote vulnerability. For example, OVC may be punished for not concentrating during lessons and attending classes irregularly due to the challenging social experiences they encounter when they lose a parent (Wilson et al., 2002). Subsequently, lack of teacher training may translate to OVC not receiving the support they need as they go through social experiences which may adversely impact their education.

The following sub-section discusses the concept of inclusion as a broader concept in which inclusive education is embedded.

## **2.6 Inclusion**

While this study utilises inclusive education as one of the major concepts, it is worth noting that inclusive education is part of a wider philosophy of inclusion (Suubi, 2010). In order to engage in a comprehensive study of the social experiences of OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education, inclusion as a critical concept for this study is addressed. This section therefore discusses inclusion as a critical concept in which inclusive education is grounded.

Inclusion, just like inclusive education, lacks a distinct and uniform meaning; hence it becomes an idea that assumes different meanings to fit different contexts (Armstrong et al., 2011). This point of view is supported by Graham and Slee (2005), who believe that the different competing discourses of inclusion have resulted in inclusion assuming different meanings and understanding, hence causing it to be a highly contested concept in education.

Ainscow and Miles (2008) define inclusion by engaging with five perspectives. The first perspective proposes that inclusion is a concern with disability and special needs. This perspective argues that the common assumption is that inclusion is all about educating learners with disabilities in regular schools/ mainstream classrooms. This view is supported by Nsibandwe (2015) who observed that teachers in Eswatini defined inclusion in education as a process of bringing learners with physical disabilities from special into mainstream schools. This perspective assumes a narrow view of inclusion, as it focuses on physical disability. Such a view may promote the exclusion of other minority groups who are vulnerable and marginalised in society. Additionally, this view is in contradiction with the propositions of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which views inclusion as the involvement and participation of all children in education, regardless of difference in their community schools.

The second perspective postulated by Ainscow and Miles (2008) is that inclusion is viewed as “a response to disciplinary exclusions” (2008, p. 3). This perspective takes the view that inclusion is all about bringing into the regular school, children who may have been previously expelled from other schools because of behavioural problems, pregnancy or have been in juvenile correctional facilities. While inclusion encompasses ensuring that such minority groups are part of mainstream schooling, this view narrows the scope of inclusion. Focus is limited to children assumed to have behavioural challenges and other minority groups may remain at the margins.

The third perspective views inclusion in a wider context as it sees inclusion in relation to “overcoming discrimination and disadvantage in relation to any groups of students who are vulnerable to exclusionary pressures” (Ainscow & Miles, 2008, p. 4). This view adopts a broader understanding of inclusion since it focuses on more groups that are at risk of being excluded from education. By viewing inclusion as a measure that incapacitates discrimination, this view assumes a more social justice approach to education as it focuses on issues that relate to equality and fairness amongst the students. This approach suggests that there should be an examination and dissemination of ideologies that promote difference. It also suggests that societies should work collectively to ensure meaningful engagement of all members including marginalised groups (Artiles et al., 2006).

The fourth perspective envisions inclusion as the promotion of a “school for all” (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). This angle perceives inclusion as developing a communal school for all children. Ainscow and Miles argue that a school for all may mean different things in different contexts. They propose that while the idea of a school for all entails fighting against social class-based discriminations, it does not fully embrace and value difference (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). Rather, this perspective promotes the thinking that some children need to be brought into a pre-existing space which originally belongs to others. Graham and Slee support that with this form of inclusion “There is an implicit centred-ness to the term inclusion, for it discursively privileges notions of the pre-existing by seeking to include the ‘Other’ into a prefabricated, naturalised space” (2005, p. 4). A possible long-term consequence of this perspective is that, children who are brought into the school always see themselves as an addition that never becomes part of the already existing nucleus of the school.

The last perspective according to Ainscow and Miles (2008) is that of inclusion as ‘Education for All’. This perspective of inclusion focuses on ensuring that education for all children is

compulsory and free, especially in countries of the Global South (Ainscow & Miles, 2008). Viewing inclusion from this angle could promote the notion that inclusion is only about ensuring that all children get to school while subsequently neglecting how children are supported in schools. While the 'Education for All' perspective focuses on ensuring that all children access and complete their education, it seems to focus less on ensuring that the quality of education remains uncompromised. When the Free Primary Education Policy (a policy that was enacted to promote the Education for All movement in Eswatini) was implemented in 2010, parents of all children rushed to have their children enrolled in their local schools. However, Fakudze (2012) notes that the primary schools were not well resourced to accommodate learners' diverse needs. She notes that there was a lack of resources such as extra desks, chairs and books to accommodate the increase in the number of learners. Additionally, Fakudze observes that the physical structures remained un-altered as there were no wheelchair ramps and entrances and the classrooms remained narrow, hindering children in wheelchairs from entering the regular classrooms. The lack of personnel to teach and provide additional support to the increasing number of learners in the classrooms was also evident (Fakudze, 2012). Consequently, while all primary school going children have been included in education through the provision of Free Primary Education; some remain excluded since they do not receive the necessary support. Evidently, in this instance inclusion was about getting all children into school without ensuring that once in school, they receive the support they needed in order to get a quality education.

For the purposes of this study, inclusion will be defined as a practice that promotes the enrolment and participation of all children in education by reframing the repertoires of practices in schools such that they support the diverse needs of all children. This is a definition that draws from the views of the Salamanca Statement which stipulates that inclusive education is a practice that dictates that all children learn together in an environment that recognises and supports the diverse needs of all the children (UNESCO, 1994). For this reason, the study will adopt the definition given above as the one most appropriate for this study.

At the centre of the philosophy of inclusion in education are a number of characteristics which are critical in ensuring the success of inclusive education. These characteristics are discussed in the subsection below.

### **2.6.1 Inclusive Practice in School**

Florian defines inclusive practice as “the actions and activities, the things staff in schools do that give meaning to the concept of inclusion” (2009, p. 38). Inclusive practices incorporate including children with disabilities in regular schools or supporting children in the learning environment without regard to categorical diversity (Florian, 2015).

A school with inclusive practices is one that continuously identifies barriers to learning and strives to provide the necessary resources to remove those barriers (Braunsteiner, 2016). This means that a school with inclusive practices is one that is always on the look-out for what could be potential exclusionary traditions and customs in the school, and eradicates them. Subsequently, an inclusionary practice involves ensuring that the culture of the school is one that promotes presence, participation and learning for all children. Janney and Snell (2013) conclude that a culture that is inclusive reflects “shared values of equality, democracy, high expectations, diversity, collaboration and the belief that all students are capable of learning and contributing” (2013, p. 5).

### **2.6.2 Welcoming environments**

A welcoming and accommodative environment is one of the core tenets of inclusion. One of the preconditions for the success of inclusion is the creation of an environment where all children feel welcome, valued and cared for by the school (UNESCO,1994). Additionally, schools with an inclusive character exhibit positive and non-prejudiced attitudes towards all children (UNESCO, 1994). In this study, a welcoming environment is one in which OVC are admitted into school regardless of difference, and moreover, mechanisms are put in place to ensure that all OVC receive the required social, emotional and academic support.

### **2.6.3 Inclusive pedagogy**

Schools that engage in inclusive practices have a curriculum that is accommodative and supportive to all learners. According to Morgan and Houghton (2011), a curriculum that is inclusive is one “that takes into account students’ educational, cultural and social background and experience as well as the presence of any physical or sensory impairment and their mental well-being” (2011, p. 5). Florian (2015) notes that the main objective in inclusive pedagogy is to ensure that the quality of education in the mainstream school is improved so that all children are able to attain the necessary learning outcomes. Inclusive pedagogy acknowledges that

individual differences do exist among children, but those differences are an ordinary component of the human condition (Florian, 2015); hence if schools have an inclusive pedagogy, teaching takes into account the different social experiences of the learners and alters the curriculum content and teaching styles to accommodate all learners. A school with an inclusive pedagogy therefore in this study, is one that is cognisant of the experiences of OVC and ensures that they are accommodated in learning by making modifications of what is ordinarily available in the classroom to ensure that no OVC is left behind.

#### **2.6.4 Inclusive-oriented leadership**

For schools to be able to implement inclusive practices there should be an inclusive oriented leadership in the school. School principals are the ones responsible for ensuring that the vision of a school is realised (Lezotte, 2001). Black and Simon argue that inclusive practice “requires leadership that plans and aligns developmental supports in order to sustain organisational learning and commitment to inclusive practices” (2014, p.165). For all children to be included in education, the leadership of the school should provide support not only to the children but to the teachers as well. Principals, who are committed to upholding inclusive practices in their schools, will provide the necessary training and avail resources to the teachers in the schools. This will enable the principals to hold the teachers accountable on issues pertaining to inclusion in the school. Additionally, principals should work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure that the vision of inclusion is upheld in the school. Consequently, as the leadership of the school, principals should be at the forefront in developing policies that will promote the inclusion of all children in education (Lezotte, 2001). In this study, the view that an inclusive-oriented leadership is one that designs and implements school policies that will ensure the support of OVC in the school is adopted. The approach that inclusive leaders are those who encourage teachers to be knowledgeable on issues pertaining to the support of OVC, and ensure that the necessary support strategies are implemented in the classroom is one that best suits this study.

#### **2.6.5 School Feeding Programmes**

Schools that have an inclusive orientation make sure that all barriers to education are removed. Hunger has been identified as one of the major barriers towards educational attainment for some children, especially OVC (WFP, 2004). Inclusive schools run feeding programmes as one of the inclusive strategies in the school. School feeding programmes in Eswatini promote

the inclusion of learners from low socio-economic backgrounds, especially those who have lost their parents, live with aged grandparents or are heads of families (Nsibande, 2016). Nsibande adds that, providing in-school feeding to all learners enables them to participate in learning and in engaging in extra-curricular activities (2016). Notably, because of the lack of food at home, OVC are motivated to attend and stay in school because of the free meal they receive (Mwoma & Pillay, 2016).

Additionally, the take-home rations that some OVC obtain from school play a significant role in supporting them and their siblings at home. When schools provide take-home parcels to OVC, they promote the retention of OVC girls in school. WFP (2011) notes that girls are at a higher risk of withdrawing from school when they become orphaned or vulnerable. Girls unlike boys are seen to contribute more towards the up-keep of the home by performing domestic chores, such as taking care of younger siblings and cooking. In the event of the death or ailment of a parent, girls are more likely to withdraw from school to fulfil those domestic roles (WFP, 2011). It has been noted that if girl-OVC receive take-home food parcels either in the form of dry rations or as leftover food from the school meal, they are more inclined to stay in school and complete their education, because the food parcels provide a form of relief for their needy families (WFP, 2011). This means that an inclusive school is one that takes into consideration the unique needs of OVC concerning food and makes arrangements to ensure that OVC who need food are provided for through school feeding programmes and that OVC who are heads of families receive extra parcels to take home.

While school feeding programmes promote school attendance and inclusion, it has also been argued that school feeding programmes are exclusionary practices that promote the labelling of certain groups, especially OVC (Engelbrecht, 2011). When school feeding programmes are designed such that they target only the OVC, then they may promote the exclusion of children who are orphans or vulnerable (Engelbrecht, 2011). It is therefore important that school feeding programmes are not specifically put in place for OVC but for all children so as to minimise further categorisation of children in schools.

## **2.7 Exclusion**

The concept of exclusion is one that is characterised by complexity, inconsistency and confusion (Kearney, 2009). Exclusion therefore, means different things to different people. Generally, exclusion in the area of inclusive literature seems to be perceived to be the opposite

of inclusion. Kearney (2009) believes that, “Exclusion is used to mean the opposite of inclusion... To be included is not to be excluded. If a student is not included (or is not present, participating and learning) at school, they are experiencing exclusion” (2009, p.12). Kearney’s definition suggests that exclusion takes place when children are denied the opportunity to be educated in the regular school with their peers. It further suggests that exclusion is when children in schools are not given the opportunity to participate in learning. While Kearney’s perspective of exclusion touches on important aspects such as presence and participation, it seems to lack the “support” aspect which must be exhibited while a learner is present or participating in learning. This study therefore argues that a child who is excluded is one whose individual needs are not fully supported within the learning environment.

While Kearney’s definition centres on exclusion being the opposite of inclusion, Armstrong et al. (2011) argues that, “Inclusion cannot simply be constructed as the opposite of exclusion. Inclusion and exclusion are interrelated processes and their interplay constantly creates new inclusive/exclusive conditions and possibilities” (2011, p. 36). The argument given by Armstrong et al. (2011) challenges Kearney’s perspective that exclusion is the opposite of inclusion. It suggests that to include is not to exclude. It makes the argument that; a child’s presence in school does not mean that s/he is not excluded from education.

The view taken by Armstrong et al. (2011) on exclusion is supported by Slee (2011). According to Slee, exclusion should not be constructed as the opposite of inclusion, rather; exclusion should be viewed as a precondition to the understanding of the origins and operations of marginalisation and discrimination. Slee’s proposal is that exclusion be viewed as a problem, a barrier to inclusion, a prerequisite to the implementation of inclusion and not as the opposite of inclusion. Viewing exclusion as the opposite of inclusion often leads to the removal of learners from special education surroundings that are thought to be oppressive and exclusionary, to different surroundings where they often stand out as different visitors and forever occupy the marginal status (Slee, 2011). Therefore, bringing in all children despite their differences into school does not necessarily mean that they are participating and succeeding in education. I propose that bringing in all children to school, making sure they participate by providing the necessary support they need to be successful in education is being not exclusionary. Graham and Slee (2005) conclude that “To shift children around on an educational chessboard is not in itself inclusion” (2005, p. 3). Based on the aforementioned arguments, I concur that, exclusion is not the opposite of inclusion. Exclusion is the failure to remove all barriers to education in schools. It is the inability of schools to level the educational

grounds such that every child accesses and participates in education. When schools are excluding, they are failing to identify and remove unequal social relations and injustices that promote an environment in which some learners are stripped of whatever little self-confidence they have as they are chipped and chiselled to become forms that fit into the existing environment.

The above discussion of conceptualisations of exclusion have a significant bearing on the experiences of OVC. The presence of OVC in the classrooms, participating in learning with other children does not necessarily mean that they are not excluded from education. For OVC, exclusion means the failure of institutions and all relevant stakeholders to remove barriers that might inhibit the success of OVC in education. It means failure to provide the necessary support that OVC may require to succeed in education. When OVC experience exclusion, it means the origins of their marginalisation and discrimination have not been established and dealt with. Their voices on their social experiences as a minority group have not been listened to so as to establish the source of their exclusion; hence they continue to experience unequal social relations and injustice in schools.

At the centre of exclusion are exclusionary practices that prohibit the participation and support of OVC in education. The following sub-section discusses the exclusionary practices which may promote the exclusion of OVC from education:

### **2.7.1 Exclusionary practices in schools**

Exclusionary practices can be defined as those practices that hinder children from participating and achieving success in school. Kearney (2011) observes that exclusionary practice in education:

Describes not only aspects of physical non-presence, but also covert factors, in particular, hidden forces that make it difficult for a student to have full and fair access to all the things that happen at the school. This includes things such as the curriculum, access to friendship, access to the teacher and so forth (2011, p. 10).

#### **2.7.1.1 Negative school culture**

Exclusionary practice in schools can take different forms. Kearney (2011) argues that the culture of the school may promote the exclusion of some children from education. Schein (1985) as cited in Ainscow et al. (2013) defines culture as “the deeper levels of basic

assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, operating unconsciously to define how they view themselves and their working context” (2013, p. 14). School culture pertains to the way a community perceives certain concepts, and how those perceptions then shape and influence the way the school operates (The Glossary of Educational Reform, 2013). In a bid to eradicate exclusion from education, UNESCO (1994) has urged local governments to ensure that schools remove school policies that promote the discrimination of some children, such as implementing unfair admission practices (i.e. entrance tests and school fees). However; most schools continue to promote undemocratic and exclusionary practices (Perry, 2009). Some schools continue to uphold practices such as the reward system whereby children who achieve higher grades are viewed as more “acceptable” than pupils who attain low grades (Cullen, 1997). For the fact that the absence of a parent in their child’s life could impact negatively on the child’s academic performance (Fleming, 2015), OVC are more likely to be excluded from reward ceremonies such as speech and prize giving in the school.

#### **2.7.1.2 Exclusionary classroom practices**

Additionally, the timelines given to teachers in which they should have completed all teaching in preparation for summative assessments puts pressure on the teachers to rush through the teaching content such that other children could be left behind. When children lose their parents, they often have difficulty in successfully completing school work (Ganga & Maphalala, 2013). The changes they experience during the time of loss bring many significant challenges for the OVC in relation to their education. The process of grieving or taking care of an ailing parent may result in the OVC experiencing higher levels of absenteeism from school. During this time the child may miss out on material covered in the classroom, and as Slee (2011) puts it, teachers are accountable to different stakeholders who expect them to complete the syllabus and achieve good results at the end of the year. For this reason, teachers push and rush through teaching in an attempt to comply with the requirements of the educational system. Given this situation, teachers may have little or no time to support OVC who will lag behind their school work as they go through the emotional and social upheavals in their lives. Additionally, OVC often face challenges with homework since most of them do not have a parent to help them with this (Ganga & Maphalala, 2013). Consequently, the inflexible curriculum becomes an exclusionary practice for OVC in the school.

### **2.7.1.3 Exclusionary language**

Language forms part of the culture in any give society. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as cited in Janks (2010) “Language, discourse and rhetoric does things: it constructs social categories, it gives orders, it persuades us, it justifies, explains, gives reasons, excuses. It constructs reality” (2010, p. 60). Based on the views of the TRC, it may be said that language is not just a tool for communication, but it is a mechanism of power which works to include and exclude certain groups in society. Language has the power to include and exclude because ideologies and values are transported through language. The use of language has contributed to the exclusion of OVC in schools in Eswatini. In Eswatini, the official siSwati name given to OVC is “Bantfwana bendlunkhulu” (translated to children who are the responsibility of the Chief and his elders in the community) Dlamini (2020). In schools, because, issues pertaining to the welfare of the OVC are handled in the Deputy Prime Minister’s office, OVC are often referred to as “Bantfwana ba Prime Minister” translated to “the Prime Minister’s children” (Thwala, 2013, p. 114). When OVC are given names based on the situations they experience, they may be made to feel different and as a result feel excluded in school and in the community in general.

### **2.7.1.4 Lack of Teacher Training on how to support OVC**

Lack of training on how to provide social, emotional and psychological support to learners including OVC may be an exclusionary practice in schools. Kearney (2011) observes that there is a need for teachers to be trained on issues pertaining to the social and emotional well-being of the children in school. While teachers may be sufficiently trained on pedagogy, teacher education training seems to pay minimal attention to ethical and social dimensions of teaching (Ogina, 2010). When educating a child, the emotional and social factors cannot be separated from cognitive factors (Ogina, 2010). For this reason, during the teaching and learning process, teachers are expected not only to focus on the intellectual aspect but also on the social and emotional aspects of the children’s development (Ogina, 2010). When children undergo a range of social problems and are supported in school, they experience a sense of belongingness which is critical for their educational development (Kearney, 2011). However, when children are not supported by the school as they encounter those social challenges, they are likely to feel excluded and not part of the school community. The feeling of exclusion may lead to more negative experiences which may eventually promote behavioural and emotional problems for children (Majanga et al., 2015).

Slee concludes that:

Causes of exclusion may be different, but those on the receiving end and the results feel much the same... Exclusion is a powerful and elusive construct. Powerful in that it is the force whereby some members of a society are denied access to the resources and rewards of that society. This reduces their power, and their voice and denies them the ideals of social justice; (2011, p. 47-48).

Slee's argument points out that exclusion, for whatever reason, is a harmful practice. It leaves those who are excluded socially and emotionally disabled. Consequently, if OVC do not receive the necessary support as they undergo a series of social and economic challenges resulting from the absence of a parent or parents, they may feel excluded from education.

## **2.8 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed literature and discussed the concepts relevant to this study. From the literature reviewed, it was revealed that OVC are a group of children who encounter social experiences which are characterised by significant hardship and misfortune. While this may be a true reflection of the experiences of OVC, it would seem that more researchers opt to view the social experiences of OVC through the lens of vulnerability. There also seems to be dearth literature on the social experiences of OVC with regards to inclusion or exclusion. While there is ample literature on the social experiences of OVC, they are not aligned to the concepts of inclusion, exclusion or inclusive education. Also, it would seem that most research as highlighted by the literature reviewed, is driven by adults conducting research 'on' OVC not 'with' OVC. This means the voices of OVC as insiders are not given sufficient platform for audibility by the researchers.

The next chapter discusses the methodology that has been used in obtaining data that answers the key questions to this research.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework within which this study is situated. In this chapter, the theory that forms the foundation for knowledge pertaining to the social experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion from education, is outlined.

The theoretical framework that supports this study is that of **Resilience**. A definition that captures the essence of resilience as a theoretical framework for this study is proposed by Southwick et al. (2014) who suggest that resilience is the capacity for an individual to recover and spring back from the adversity they may be encountering at the point in time. According to these authors, resilience entails the ability for individuals not only to bounce back from adversity, but to sometimes grow and make positive progression even in the adversity they encounter (Southwick et al., 2014). This definition has been seen appropriate for this study because of how it lends itself to the experiences of OVC. It is a definition that captures the essence that while children from marginalised backgrounds such as OVC experience extreme hardship and misfortune that impacts negatively on their lives, these children do make positive progression in education and in life in general. While they ‘bend’ as a result of the hardships they encounter, they are able to ‘bounce’ back and even attain success in the goals that they set for themselves with regards to their education or life in general.

This definition of resilience given above also captures the different elements of resilience. From the definition, resilience comes across as a process and an outcome. It is a process whereby an individual undergoes adversity, frustration and misfortune in their lives, yet is able to resume stable functioning and positive development (Lesedema, 2014 & van Breda, 2018). It is also portrayed as an outcome of adversity, a quality that one develops as a result of the adversity and misfortune they have encountered in their lives. With regards to OVC, this definition presupposes that the experiences of misfortune and hardship that OVC experience sometimes results in OVC actually becoming stronger individuals who because of the hardships they encounter become autonomous and more resolute in achieving what matters the most to them.

Based on the afore-given definitions, this study defines resilience as the ability for OVC to remain strong and continue with their education amidst the adversity they encounter in their

lives. It is about their ability to harness the resources offered by the environment in order to sustain their wellbeing and inclusion in education (Southwick et al., 2014). It speaks to the ability of an OVC to make the most out of whatever is made available to sustain himself or herself during adverse circumstances (Ungar, 2008).

This study proposes that although OVC encounter numerous challenges as a result of the adverse circumstances in which they often find themselves, their vulnerability does not always result in negative outcomes (van Breda, 2018). While OVC experience notable challenges in their lives, they are able to bounce back and even grow from the adversarial encounters they experience (Southwick et al., 2014). This study proposes that; at the core of OVC resilience are two concepts, namely; individual-oriented resilience building resources and structural resilience-building resources. The continuous interaction between these two underlying concepts reduces the risks which could otherwise enhance the exclusion of OVC from education and from life in general. As the elements of individual agency (which include autonomy, sovereignty and independence) and structural agency (which include relational-oriented conceptions such as Ubuntu; structural mechanisms such as ideology and legal or material resources) interact, OVC vulnerability to adversity and exclusion is lessened.

The following section outlines the origins of resilience. A historical perspective that aims at creating a foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the origins of resilience is given.

### **3.2 The origins and historical perspectives of Resilience**

Resilience is a concept that has its origins in the study of natural systems (Hollings, 1973). In ecology, resilience has been defined as the ability for systems of nature to regain normative or typical physical or functional quality following a trepidation (Holling, 1973 in Cairns, 1996). Holling (1996) adds that while stabilising forces play a critical role in maintaining productivity in biogeochemical cycles, forces which destabilise the environment are also necessary to promote resilience and maintain productivity. In this instance, the interplay between stabilising and destabilising elements form the foundation for resilience.

Although the theory of resilience has its origins in ecological systems, over the years, it has been incorporated into the study of human development. Areas that have incorporated resilience into their disciplines include health and biological disciplines, sociology, environmental sciences, psychiatry and psychology (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). The framework of resilience in these areas has been used to establish the processes which enabled children and

young people from at-risk environments to develop positive outcomes amidst the challenging circumstances in their lives. In this study, the theory of resilience has been utilised to understand the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. By utilising this framework, the processes which interact at different levels to enable the inclusion of OVC in education were brought to the fore. Conversely, this framework also provided a lens through which the adverse circumstances that promoted the exclusion of OVC from education could be viewed.

The origins of the study of resilience in human development date back to the era of World War II, whereby the effects of the war on the mental health of children became an area of interest to clinicians (Masten, 2015). The focus at this stage was psychopathological, where interest was in looking into the negative psychological bearings of the traumatic maltreatment and violence that children had encountered during the war. However, clinicians noted that children who encountered adversity during the war did not show traumatic shock when they were with their parents (Masten, 2015). This observation sparked an interest in understanding why these children did not show signs of negative development amidst the risks they were experiencing then.

Pioneers of research in resilience include Werner and Smith who conducted longitudinal studies on the Hawaiian island of Kauai, in the 1950's to 1970's (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). This research looked into the biological and psychological risk factors of children who grow up in households which experienced poverty, parental divorce or cases of mental health illnesses in the home. According to Werner (2000), the expectation was that the children who grew up in adverse circumstances would do poorly as a result of adversity. However, it transpired that while one out of three of those children who came from at-risk families developed learning and behavioural problems, the others grew up to be responsible and goal-oriented adolescents. Werner and Smith (2000), concluded that these children did well despite the challenges they experienced because of three critical aspects, namely; dispositional attributes of the individual, affectional ties with the family and external support systems in the environment (Werner, 2000).

In relation to individual characteristics, Werner and Smith uncovered that in early childhood, resilient children at high-risk of negative developmental progression actually experienced fewer illnesses and were perceived as active, affectionate, and socially responsive by their parents (Werner & Smith, 1989). Resilient children displayed additional traits, such as self-

help skills, sensorimotor acquisition, and language development. In early adolescence, resilient children displayed good problem-solving skills, communication skills, and perceptual motor development. In their late teens, resilient children possessed high internal locus of control, an achievement-oriented attitude, and positive self-esteem (Werner & Smith, 1989).

With regards to the external environmental support systems, Werner and Smith (1977) noted how children from at-risk environments selected what they needed from their environment, tailor made it to suit their needs and ensured their wellbeing in an environment that seemed not conducive for their positive development. From the researchers' observations, it was evident that the children were able to attain positive developmental outcomes because of the support they received from their teachers at school. It was apparent that children who did well despite the challenging circumstances in which they lived, did so because their teachers had higher expectations for them, provided them with more feedback, encouraged and praised their work, paid necessary attention to them and paced the classroom activities appropriately such that their difficulties were taken into consideration during teaching and learning (Werner, 2000).

In addition to intrinsic and extrinsic factors being critical in enhancing resilience in OVC, Werner and Smith (1977) uncovered that age was one of the individual contributing factors to resilience. The study noted that younger children struggled to remain strong when they encountered adversity. Equally, older children who were part of the study revealed greater ability to withstand adversity. Consequently, the older the children got, the more resilient they became. In addition to age, it transpired that gender was also another contributing factor to resilience. It was uncovered that girls seemed to be more resilient than boys (Werner, 2000). These observations imply that the younger the OVC, the more likely they are to experience exclusion from education, while the older the OVC get, the more capable they become of reaching out to their environment and utilising what is available to them to ensure their wellbeing during adversity. It also presupposes that girl-OVC are more autonomous and abler to withstand hardship and misfortune than boy-OVC. These aspects are to some extent confirmed by the findings of this research, as will be discussed in forthcoming chapters.

Other scholars who took notable interest in the theory of resilience include Rutter (1979) who conducted an epidemiological study that reflects the first category of resilience which was one that was individual-oriented (as will be discussed in the following sub-sections). Rutter conducted a study in London on children whose parents had been diagnosed with mental health illness. Rutter's study, which was conducted over a ten-year period, revealed that children born

to or living with mentally ill parents did not acquire the mental illness, nor did they show signs of maladaptive behaviour as a result of residing with mentally ill parents (Rutter, 1979). Of interest to Rutter, was why many of these children who were from at risk situations showed no signs of the adverse conditions that they had to deal with on regular basis. At this stage, Rutter concluded that these children were genetically underwired to exhibit positive development amidst adverse conditions (Rutter, 1979). Rutter also observed that the school environment played a significant role in promoting positive development in the children who resided with parents with mental illness (1979). Rutter's observations not only played a significant role in bringing to the fore the concept of protective factors within resilience, but also the importance of adversity in promoting resilience (Rutter, 2012). According to Rutter's observations, no adversity meant no resilience (Rutter, 2012).

Rutter's studies also introduced the idea of "steeling" as part of the concept of resilience. According to Rutter (2012), negative experiences can have a strengthening effect which determines how an individual reacts to future adverse circumstances. Rutter (2012) notes that exposure to small incidences of adversity often helped build up resistance to a major incidence of adversity. When children encountered minimal episodes of adversity earlier on in their lives, they are not necessarily inclined to be maladaptive, rather they seem to develop a characteristic of immunity under stressful conditions, a characteristic which Rutter refers to as being "invulnerable" (Rutter, 2012). Rutter's argument seems to suggest that the incidences of misfortune that OVC encounter usually create a framework for OVC autonomy and agency. From Rutter's argument, it can be inferred that exposure to infinitesimal experiences of hardship at an earlier age, enables OVC to withstand the relentless experiences of hardship and challenges that they experience as they progress in life.

Other founding researchers of the concept of resilience include Norman Garmezy, who looked into the development of children whose mothers had been diagnosed with schizophrenia. At this point, children who were born into families where mothers were schizophrenic were perceived to be at risk of developing psychopathology (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). While Garmezy noted that individual characteristics enabled children to remain resilient, environmental features such as the family and other supportive factors also contributed to positive developmental outcomes in children encountering adversity (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). In his study, Garmezy also noted that some children from risk environments were more resilient than others (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). This means that while OVC may encounter similar situations of adversity, they are likely to react differently towards those situations.

Some OVC may show high levels of adaptation while others may exhibit lower levels of adaptation to the same situation. Resilience in this instance is not a “one size fits all” concept, but one which is experienced differently by OVC as determined by other factors within the environment in which these children reside.

Other research conducted by Garmezy includes a study whereby Garmezy, Masten and Tellegen looked into understanding how resiliency influenced children when they experienced stressful situations (Garmezy et al., 1984). This study focused on elementary school children and the impact that life stressors had on their competency at that level. The children who were part of the study were those who encountered stressful life conditions. The focus of the project was on the impact life “stressors” had on the competency levels of the elementary school students studied. The study revealed that some of the children from disadvantaged backgrounds were competent and did not exhibit characteristics of negative development. These findings created an interest in further research on why some children did not develop negative adaptations as a result of the adversity they encountered. Because of this finding, they began to question why some children did not succumb to the adversity they faced and develop negative adaptations.

### **3.3 Descriptions of Resilience**

The theory of resilience is one that is characterised by expansive and multiple descriptions (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). In its broadness, it tends to follow positive behavioural patterns in the midst of risk, challenge and adversity (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). This section discusses how different scholars describe the concept of resilience and how these descriptions relate to the study on OVC social experiences with regards to their inclusion/exclusion from education and generally.

In some disciplines, resilience is viewed as an intrinsic phenomenon, whereby the ability of a person to remain strong in the face of adversity is embedded in the biological genetic makeup of that individual (Flasch, 1998). In the context of psychiatry, resilience is described as the psychological and biological potencies that people utilise to master change successfully (Flasch, 1998). This view is also evident in the work of Wu et al., (2013) who argue that resilience is a result of how genetic and epigenetic factors interact with each other such that the individual is able to remain strong or succumb to adversity (Wu et al., 2013). This view is similar to that of Malhi et al. (2019) who propose that genetic polymorphisms serve as a predisposing factor to resilience in individuals. According to these authors, this biological

component is critical in determining if an individual can remain strong in the face of adversity. While this argument may be legitimate, because of how it lends itself to a medical framework, this approach was deemed to be beyond the scope of this study, hence while this study acknowledges that resilience is a multidimensional prospect which incorporates the individual component, the element of genes and DNA as critical components of resilience have not been adopted. This study supposes that an approach that is grounded in the genetic disposition of an individual could assume that humans are born with individual characteristics that enable them to cope with adversity. Consequently, OVC who lack those individual characteristics could be deemed to be biologically defective. Such a view portrays resilience as something that cannot be acquired since it is a genetic component and as a result, those perceived to be without those individual characteristics are predestined for failure. Adopting this approach could not only promote the view that some OVC are defective, but it could also perpetuate their exclusion from education and from life in general. It could promote the notion that when OVC fail to rise above the challenges they experience and achieve general wellbeing and inclusion, the problem then is with them and not with the structures around them. It is for this reason that a more social approach (whereby individual agency is situated within other forms of agency) was adopted for this study.

While the afore-mentioned authors view the individual component of resilience as a result of the interplay in the genes, other scholars argue that resilience as the capability of individuals to achieve functioning that they have reason to value (Hoffman & Metz, 2017). They postulate that central to resilience is individual agency; the ability for one to choose that which they believe is of value to them (Frediani, 2010). According to these authors, at the centre of resilience as the capability of an individual, is the idea that the human is a free being who shapes his or her own life, rather than being submissively driven around by other organisms of the environment (Nussbaum, 1999). From Nussbaum's (1999) view, it is evident that resilience in this instance speaks of individual independence and ability to navigate the environment and select what they deem necessary for their livelihood.

In addition to the views of Nussbaum (1999), and Hoffman and Metz (2017), Mostafa and Lim (2020) advance that the intrinsic component of resilience speaks to an act of self-determination whereby an individual chooses to pursue a particular activity to satisfy their own goals, wishes or desires. From this argument, it comes across that rather than being born with or without a particular trait, the internal component is about 'choice'. It is about an individual's ability to select or perform acts that will satisfy their interest or requirement. This view lends itself

significantly to this study. Rather than adopting an approach which views specific genetic modifications as the main determinants of resilience in the context of adversity which could imply that some OVC are born with characteristics that rendered them resilient (Malhi et al., 2019); this study was able to advance that OVC had individual capacity which enabled them to choose to engage in or perform activities that would result in their inclusion and wellbeing in general. While the concept of choosing to perform acts that enabled their resilience and inclusion was adopted, it does not mean that this study proposes that the issues of resilience and inclusion be left as a burden that OVC carry on their own. Rather this view enabled this study to project that resilience is not as dichotomous phenomenon which an OVC either has or does not have, but it is an entity that occurs on a spectrum, presenting itself in different degrees in response to the different life experiences that OVC encounter (Perlman et al., 2018). It is something that under conducive circumstances where the environment provides the needed resources, OVC can choose to interact with that environment such that their resilience and inclusion are expedited. In so doing, this study was therefore able to avoid an approach that blames OVC or portrays OVC as unable to pursue what is important to them.

In addition to the views given in the above discussion, other authors argue that resilience is more of a dynamic process of adaptation which is facilitated by an overlap between different attributes (Lewis, 2012; Ungar, 2013; Nebhinani & Jain, 2019). According to these authors, at the core of resilience is a binary relationship whereby individual resources interact with structural resources to enable individuals to withstand adversity. These authors believe that the ability for one to do something is embedded in the social, economic and political conditions of the environment, consequently, the individual's ability to achieve cannot be recognised outside the collective resources that the environment has to offer. As an individual and the environment interact, resilience is expedited (Ungar, 2013).

The afore-given description clearly brings to the fore the multidimensional nature of resilience. The authors' arguments reveal that resilience is not a single faceted concept that should be viewed through a single lens. The arguments made bring forth the binary relationship between the individual and the environmental structures which enable resilience. Arguments on the individual component enabled this study to frame the acts of OVC agency and autonomy which promoted their resilience and inclusion, while arguments on the environmental component enabled the study to frame OVC experiences which aligned to structural agency. The study was also able to bring forth the relationship between these two components and how that relationship promoted resilience and inclusion for OVC.

Other approaches view resilience as an outcome of the adversities that an individual encounter in his/her life. As mentioned earlier on, Southwick et al., (2014) describe resilience as the ability for people to bear the brunt of adversity and even grow in the face of adversity while Katyal (2015) similarly defines resilience as the ability to face challenges and to become stronger as a result of those challenges. Both Southwick et al. (2014) and Katyal (2015)'s definitions presuppose that sometimes being resilient comes as a result of the adversities that individuals encounter in their lives. Resilience becomes an outcome, an end product where adversity results in someone learning new skills and developing creative techniques to ensure wellbeing. Adversity in this instance is a necessity for resilience to manifest. Such a view resonates with Holling (1996), who as highlighted earlier, argues that destabilisers in ecosystems are actually necessary for those systems to regenerate. With regard to this study, these views imply that resilience in OVC is as a result of the challenges and hardships they encounter in their daily lives. These views presuppose that OVC are able to achieve the goals of inclusion in education and to life in general because they have been 'steeled' by the experiences of adversity which they encounter on a daily basis. This view set a basis on which OVC experiences of adversity were brought to the fore as those that enabled their agency. For example; acts of responsibility such as competence and creativity were brought to the fore through seeing adversity as a phenomenon that strengthened OVC agency rather than portraying OVC as victims who fell apart when facing adverse situations.

Recent developments describe resilience as a cultural construct. According to Ungar (2008), resilience is embedded in culture. It is a concept that cannot be described outside the cultural context of those whose resilience is being studied, (Masten, 2014). The protective factors which promote resilience in OVC are often rooted in communal cultural norms and practices (Wright et al., 2013); hence, resilience cannot be separated from the cultural context in which those protective factors are afforded. In support of the cultural description of resilience, a study conducted by Thamuku and Daniel (2012), revealed that in Botswana, rites of passage strengthen OVC resilience significantly. Being part of the rites of passage for OVC enabled them to commit to therapeutic transformation, build a supportive group and experience more inclusion in the community in which they lived (Thamuku & Daniel, 2012). This view has been of significant value to this study. From this view, the experiences of OVC reflecting the role played by culture in the inclusion/exclusion of OVC were navigated. Through this view, conceptions such as that of Ubuntu which speak to the traditional principles and practices that

the society upholds and how they enable or disable resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general have been brought to the fore.

Other scholars who have taken the concept of resilience forward have argued that resilience can be divided into three capacities, namely; the adaptive, the anticipatory and the absorptive capacities (Bahadur et al., 2015). The adaptive capacity within resilience speaks of how social systems including human beings have the capacity to adapt to numerous long-term and future adversity and to adjust after a disaster (Bahadur, et al., 2015). By taking advantage of the disturbance, social systems can bounce into a stronger state than they were before and even learn from the experience of adversity (Bahadur et al, 2015). These findings mean that OVC have the capacity to acclimatise to adversity. Instead of crumbling, they can adjust to their situations of adversity and develop that steeling quality noted in Rutter (2012).

The anticipatory capacity on the other hand suggests that social systems have the ability to anticipate and reduce the effects of adversity. This conceptualisation infers that OVC have the capability to prepare and plan for difficult times before they even befall them. By anticipating what could happen as a result of being who they are, Bahadur et al.'s (2015) contentions imply that OVC can prepare themselves well in advance such that the impact of adversity is cushioned or diverted. With regards to the findings of this study, I do agree with this view. As reflected by the findings of this study, OVC ability to plan ahead and put in place measures that will circumvent possible hardships were evident. In addition, this view was also useful in bringing to the fore OVC awareness on their exclusion and how best they could be supported such that they are able to achieve their goals of inclusion in education and into life in general.

Lastly, the absorptive capacity highlights that social systems have the ability to face and manage adverse conditions using available skills and resources (Bahadur et al., 2015). Based on the prospects of this approach, when OVC lose their parent(s), encounter lack of familial support or any other form of misfortune, they try to reach an understanding and realisation that such experiences are part of their lives as OVC. Such an approach gives them the strength to stand up to and control disturbances before and after they occur.

Other scholars have argued that in addition to Bahadur et al.'s (2015) components of resilience, the component of transformation is also a critical part of resilience. Jeans et al. (2017) argue that resilience is underpinned by the adaptive, absorptive and transformative which work together to produce positive developmental outcomes in the event of adversity. Transformative capacity is the ability to make purposeful change to stop or minimise the causes of risk,

vulnerability, poverty, and inequality within the society (Jeans et al., 2017). It is a component of resilience that addresses social injustices within communities. It focuses on challenging the imbalances of power and bringing significant change to the structures responsible for promoting vulnerability and risk in society (Jeans et al., 2017). It is about making a profound change at the very structures that produce and maintain adversity in communities (Bahadur et al., 2015). The transformative capacity therefore is a component of resilience which does not focus on genetic characteristics of OVC, but it looks at how the environment can be changed such that OVC are able to interact with it and access the support they need for their wellbeing. It is a component that also calls for individual transformation whereby OVC have to undergo change in attitudes, beliefs and motivation as they engage in deep on-going change to the structures that exclude them from achieving their goals, including their right to education (Jeans et al., 2017). This view has been beneficial to this study in that it brought to the fore the rigid structures and processes that perpetuate OVC exclusion. It also brought to the fore how OVC in their state as autonomous beings rose up to, challenged and even transformed some of the experiences which impacted negatively on their education and life in general. In so doing, various pathways and trajectories through which OVC can be better supported were brought to the fore.

### **3.4 Other developments in resilience studies**

The theory of resilience is one that is characterised by dynamism and continuous evolution (Masten, 2018). According to Masten (2018), resilience has evolved in four significant waves. The first wave of resilience assumed an individual-oriented focus. According to Masten (2018), initial scholars noted that some people who were identified as highly vulnerable to encountering problems because of their adverse situations, would actually do just fine in the midst of those problems. Researchers began comparing these groups of children who seemed to be doing fine in spite of the challenging circumstances to others who were in the same situation, yet succumbed to adversity. Interest in this wave of resilience was on the “why” some did well when others in the same situations failed to do just as well (Richardson, 2002). Central to the investigations during this wave was identifying features which accounted for positive adaptation in the context of adversity (Wright et al., 2013). It focused on the protective factors that help children from marginalised communities grow in the face of adversity (Richardson, 2002), consequently bringing a paradigm shift from focus on the risk factors that lead to

psychological predicaments to the identification of strengths which enable positive development despite adversity (Richardson, 2002).

This development was critical in exploring issues of exclusion. Since this wave of theories on resilience challenged the grand theories of developmental psychology which placed emphasis on development as an individual process which unfolds from within (Skolnick, 1975), it means it contested the notion that what happens around marginalised children including OVC has little or no bearing on their inclusion or exclusion in education and generally. This wave therefore opposes the view that some OVC are born with characteristics which enable them to be strong while others are not (Wright et al., 2013). It challenges the defeatist approach towards OVC that because they are from at risk environments, they will succumb to adversity. Clearly, it has played a significant role in changing the tendency for society to place the blame of 'defectiveness' on OVC when structures within the environment fail to support OVC effectively.

Furthermore, this wave also highlighted that risk does not happen in isolation, rather; risk is as a result of multiple factors that interact over a lengthy period (Wright et al., 2013). This means that for OVC to experience risk, there should be a number of incidences that interact with each other over a period of time. From the research conducted in the first wave, researchers highlighted that resilience is not a stable concept. It fluctuates from one period to another and from one context to another. According to Wright et al. (2013), children may show resilience in one aspect of their lives and fail to show resilience in another. This wave therefore brings to the fore that OVC experiences are not linear. They are characterised by a binary approach in which sometimes they have the strength to withstand misfortune and challenges and at other times, succumb to the negative situations in which they often find themselves.

The second wave of theories on resilience included a drive to discover the process of attaining protective factors which enable positive outcomes amidst adversity (Richardson, 2002). This wave focused on the "how" part of resilience (Masten, 2018). Its attention was on understanding how protective factors that account for desirable adaptation in some children experiencing adversity, might support health or positive outcomes in other children experiencing adversity (Masten, 2018). According to Richardson (2002), this wave described the disruptive and re-integrative process of acquiring desired resilient qualities described by the first wave. The second wave is a shift from the individualistic conceptualisation of resilience to a more environmentally situated framework (Wright et al., 2013). Emphasis in

this wave was on how individuals were not only able to remain resilient as a result of their own intrinsic strength but through other systems that the individual interacted with at different levels throughout their lives (O'Dougherty et al., 2013). This wave suggested that children who remain resilient do not do so because of their inner strength, but they do so because of how their capabilities are able to interact with other systems that offer adaptive advantage embedded in the broader cultural context (Wright et al., 2013). This wave has shaped this study in a significant way. Based on the projections made by this wave, this study has brought to the fore how OVC work in collaboration with others and utilise those resources to enable resilience and inclusion into education and life in general. From the embodiments of this wave, the broader social context and how it affects the inclusion/exclusion of OVC has been navigated and brought to the fore through the findings of this study.

The third wave was about a confluence of goals, models and methods that could promote resilience (O'Dougherty et al., 2013). It was about realising that since resilience is not necessarily an inborn quality, it can be developed over time through prevention, intervention and creation of systems which protect children facing adversity (Sikorska, 2014). This wave enables vulnerable children to discover and apply the power that steers a person towards self-actualisation and to irrepressibly reintegrate from destabilisations (Richardson, 2002). The researchers in this wave looked at ways to enhance resilience through prevention, intervention and policy for the wellbeing of OVC (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). According to Muhati-Nyakundi (2017), when resilience is linked to OVC, it is important to take into consideration individual aspects and those of the immediate environment which serve as protective and mitigating factors. Resilience in OVC therefore becomes something not left to the individual child, but also to the ability of the environment to provide pathways which OVC can actively utilise to remain strong in the face of adversity (Ungar, 2014). This wave also presupposes that OVC can be taught how to be resilient. It presumes that all OVC can be endowed with skills and knowledge that will enable them to remain strong in the midst of hardship and misfortune. It is based on the constructs of this wave that the study has brought to the fore how OVC can be taught (in school and in the communities in which they live), how to bounce back and remain strong such that they experience inclusion in education and in life in general.

The fourth wave of resilience focuses on moving resilience from a neurobiological to a socio-cultural level (Masten, 2018). Investigators at this level attempt to understand resilience as a multilevel, interconnected and complex adaptive system (Masten, 2018). The fourth wave, focuses on understanding and integrating resilience across multiple levels of analysis, with

growing attention to epigenetic and neurobiological processes, brain development, and the ways that systems interact to shape development (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). However, because of how it lends itself to a clinical approach, a more comprehensive discussion of this wave is beyond the scope of this research. Be that as it may, the multilevel and interconnectedness aspects of resilience have been valuable to this study because of how it has laid a foundation on which new forms of knowledge have emerged. These concepts (multilevel and interconnectedness) have created grounds on which I have been able to make inferences of how a multidimensional and interconnected approach towards supporting OVC could enhance their resilience and inclusion in education (as will be discussed in Chapter 9).

### **3.5 The myths, misconceptions and challenges of resilience**

Although there has been advocacy for the utilisation of resilience as a framework that moves research on vulnerable groups from a paradigm of pathology which locates inability to develop positively within the individual, resilience as a theory is not without its challenges. It is a concept that is surrounded by myths, controversies and challenges which impacts its strength as a framework (Southwick & Charney, 2012).

As mentioned earlier that resilience has its roots in the study of ecology and entails the interaction of numerous process at multiple levels, human beings unlike innate ecological systems, have sapience and therefore react differently to situations. Resilience in people will therefore be determined by emotional and cognitive responses to the interaction of numerous factors within a given environment. As a result, for one to understand resilience in humans, one must understand the complex adaptation and development of human beings in different contexts and over time. This means that resilience in OVC is affected by the environment, social relationships and the resources offered by the environment and also by how the child responds to the environment (Shean, 2015). The agentive actions of such processes are different from those of ecological processes.

Furthermore, for the reason that the theory of resilience cuts across multiple contexts, it seems to lack a universal definition. As a multi-dimensional theory, resilience is plagued by numerous definitions which result in inconsistencies and conflicting understandings (Southwick & Charney, 2012). Masten (2014) notes that the theory of resilience can be applied to many contexts including child development, families, the industrial sector, global climate change or the economy. In childhood, resilience refers to an array of phenomena including recovery after parental loss, stabilisation of behaviour after a child is adopted from an organisation, school

achievement among vulnerable children and mental wellbeing in children whose parents have mental illness, (Masten & Gewirtz, 2006). The different conceptions therefore make it difficult to reach a universal definition, resulting in resilience being a concept that can mean anything (Bahadur et al., 2015). To address this challenge, this study adopted the definition that resilience refers to the ability for OVC to remain strong and continue with their education amidst the adversity they encounter in their lives. It is about their ability to utilise the resources offered by the environment such that they achieve what matters the most to them.

Ungar (2008) adds that resilience is a culturally and contextually-based conceptualisation and for that reason, it cannot be understood outside the culture or context of the phenomenon under investigation. Ungar (2008), points out that scholars in the Western world do not fully comprehend what the concept of resilience means to marginalised groups in non-Western populations. This observation presupposes that what resilience is and what it means in the Western context could be different to what it is in non-Western contexts. Consequently, the concept of resilience is defined, understood and perceived differently across the globe. To address this concern, in this study, I relate resilience to the local cultural context by drawing on the concepts of Ubuntu as a philosophy that embodies the culture, traditions and practices of the environment in which the OVC whose experiences were investigated reside.

Furthermore, resilience is an inferred hypothesis through which conclusions about what is desirable and undesirable, what is a risk and what is not, is arrived at through different standards (Matsen & Gewirtz, 2006). Stoffel and Cain (2018), observe that there are nineteen scales of resilience measurement and they are all of Eurocentric origin. This is problematic in two ways: firstly, having such a wide range of measurement tools leads to inconsistencies in establishing resilience in OVC. This lack of a universal criteria to measure success or adaptation in children who have encountered adversity, makes it difficult to make associations and evaluations across studies such that a comprehensible body of knowledge about resilience is established (Masten & Gewirtz, 2006). While measuring resilience in itself is problematic, to measure resilience of OVC in non-Western contexts using tools designed to measure resilience in children in the Western world does not portray a true reflection of resilience for OVC in non-Western areas. In a study conducted by Tefera and Mulatie (2014), it transpired that OVC in Ethiopia were viewed as incapable of coping with adversity. A close analysis of this study reveals that Tefera and Mulatie utilised the Davidson resilience measurement tool which is Eurocentric by design. The findings of this study remain subject to challenge as it is evident that a measurement tool which was designed for one context was utilised in a different context. Taking this argument

has resulted in this study not utilising any resilient measuring tool to ascertain the social experiences of OVC. In this study, what the participants said was taken to be a true reflection of their experiences and was accepted as knowledge that reflected OVC social experiences with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education.

While other scholars believe in the measurement of resilience, Luthar (2013) contests that resilience cannot be directly measured; rather it is inferred based on the observation that a person is doing reasonably well despite significant adversity in their lives. Masten (2018) argues that resilience in living, developing beings is both complex and dynamic. Its complexity emanates from the reason that the individual and the context in which they are situated are always changing. While an individual may show resilience in one context, they may fail to remain resilient in other challenging circumstances (Shean, 2015). The countless interactions between people and their environment therefore makes it difficult to develop strategies of measurement that reflect these dynamic complexities. This has implications in how OVC can be supported such that their resilience is enhanced. Not knowing how much resilience they have, or which areas in their lives need to be honed such that levels of resilience in that area are enhanced, means that support strategies designed to enhance OVC may not be able to address the specific areas where resilience needs to be enhanced for those OVC. Be that as it may, based on Masten (2018)'s view of resilience being contextual, complex and dynamic, this study refrained from utilising any forms of measurement.

Another myth that surrounds resilience is that, resilience has to do with general superior functioning in an individual rather than a better functioning compared to others who are experiencing similar adversity or stress (Rutter, 2012). OVC who are resilient in this case would be seen to be those who are doing better when compared to other children in similar circumstances, yet resilience in this context is about achieving positive outcomes despite the adverse circumstances in which OVC often find themselves.

Furthermore, earlier views that portray resilience as a quality unique to some and not all, have contributed to the controversies that surround resilience. Work et al., (1990), observe that the work of some pioneering researchers presented resilience as a personality trait that one either has or does not have rather than as a phenomenon strengthened by environmental protective factors. Such views have created the notion that since some children succeed no matter what, those who succumb to adversity are biologically weak and failures by nature (Work et al., 1990). This approach has a negative bearing on the experiences of OVC. Since this approach

places the responsibility of succeeding no matter the circumstances in the hands of individuals, OVC who fail to pull themselves up and achieve inclusion and wellbeing through their own effort, will be perceived as those who are defective, irresponsible and lazy to work towards achieving inclusion and wellbeing in general.

While the nature of resilience is to bring to the fore the adversity that OVC experience, Rutter (2012) observes that there has been a tendency by scholars who utilise resilience as a framework for their studies to downplay the seriousness of the challenges and adversity that vulnerable groups experience as researchers push the agenda of strength, ability and agency forward. When the component of adversity is ignored as researchers' push for an all strength-based approach, the needs of OVC and others who are at risk are likely to be overlooked (Rutter, 2012). To address this concern, in this study, I have asked questions that will bring not only the ability of OVC to withstand the challenges they encounter, but also questions that will also bring to the fore the hardships and misfortunes they experience in their everyday lives.

### **3.6 Resilience as a theoretical framework for the experiences of OVC**

For the reason that hardship and misfortune are seen as concepts that are associated with harmful experiences, the society generally expects that children who live in circumstances that are characterised by these concepts will experience delirious developmental consequences (Olson, 2014). While these negative experiences may restrain OVC inclusion, they do not automatically lead to OVC exclusion from education and from life generally (Katayal, 2015). As noted in a study conducted in India, OVC in India were found to be more resilient than their non-OVC counterparts. From the findings of Katayal (2015)'s study, it is evident that contrary to the expectation that they will fall apart under the weight of the negative circumstances they encounter, OVC essentially are able to withstand the hardships they go through.

Adopting resilience as the lens through which to view the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion in or exclusion from education benefits this study in various ways. Firstly, the magnitude of the adversities that OVC encounter has generated an interest in research concentrating on bringing those encounters of hardship to the fore rather than any other aspect in the lives of OVC (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012). This has resulted in much research focusing on vulnerable children as passive agents who have become victims in their societies (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012). In the light that OVC do not necessarily succumb to the adversities they encounter (Katyal, 2015), a framework which provides a strengths-based angle to the experiences of OVC brings a shift from the pathological lens through which OVC have been

previously viewed. Resilience as a theoretical framework therefore, challenges the perceptions that poor developmental outcomes are inevitable for children who encounter adversity, misfortune or trauma in their lives (Werner,2005). It flips the coin such that instead of adversity, success and positive development in OVC are brought to the forefront. It challenges the myth that OVC are destined to become life's losers (Werner, 2005), and shows that OVC regardless of the challenges they experience can achieve positive progression in education and in life generally.

Additionally, the developments in research with regards to childhood have shifted from seeing the child as a passive “becoming” who is completely dependent on the adult for their wellbeing and livelihood. The belief that without the assistance of adults, children are not competent enough to develop their capabilities and to mature into fully recognised people and significant agents (Etieyibo, 2017) has been challenged by contemporary researchers. Current research projects the child as an active agent, who contributes to the shaping of his/her life (James & James, 2001). This perspective changes the status of a child from that of being a passive agent who lets others (adults) dictate what happens to him or her, to that of an active social actor who plays a critical role in shaping his or her destiny (James & James, 2001). Resilience therefore as a strength-based approach, brings forth the strength, abilities and agency which enable OVC to shape their experiences such that they do not succumb to adversity (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). By adopting a framework which brings forth how OVC as children are able to influence their destiny, this study contributes to contemporary research pertaining to development in children from marginalised groups.

Furthermore, resilience offers service providers with the framework for facilitating resilience in OVC (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012). In a world that is continuously experiencing disasters, pandemics and other destabilising happenings, the lives and education of children are in perpetual danger (Masten, 2012). Resilience aims to outline positive developmental pathways among children who have been able to remain strong and even do well amidst hardship. Therefore, resilience as a framework enables understandings of how healthy development among children at risk of experiencing adversity can be supported (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Consequently, by shifting the focus from deficit-oriented approaches and instead focusing on positivity and strength during adversity, research looks at the features which endorse strength in vulnerable groups and how those factors can be enhanced such that risk is lowered for OVC (Masten, 2012).

In addition, the theory of resilience has been adopted because as a framework, it provides insights not only to issues of strength but also of adversity. Werner and Smith (1989) argue that resilience is a result of protection processes that do not eradicate risks and aggressive circumstances in life, but allow the individual to deal with them efficiently. It enables the understanding of risks and threats and how they can be prevented or even eradicated in society (Masten & Gewirtz, 2006). Resilience therefore does not aim at removing adversity. Rather it projects that all who experience adversity also experience resilience. This research is about the experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion into education. Adopting a framework that brings forth both adversity and positive progression in OVC therefore provides a holistic understanding of how the social experiences of OVC indicate their inclusion or exclusion from education.

### **3.7 Resilience in education**

While in previous periods, research on resilience has been commonly conducted in the fields of ecology and later moving to areas of developmental psychopathology, psychology, and sociology, it has now gained recognition in the area of education. For the reason that children, including OVC, spend a significant amount of their time in school, resilience in OVC is now perceived as a characteristic of school settings (Doll, 2013). Incorporating resilience into the area of education therefore provides a robust framework for investigating why and how some children from marginalised groups who are considered to be at risk of not succeeding do well in school, while some of their-at-risk counterparts fail to do so (Waxman et al., 2003).

Resilience in education refers to the increased likelihood of children from vulnerable groups to succeed in school and generally, despite the adversities they encounter in their everyday experiences (Waxman et al., 2003). The theory of resilience has been adopted by researchers in the area of education for two reasons, namely; to investigate why some children from marginalised groups who are considered to be at risk of not succeeding with their education because of the adverse circumstances they find themselves in, succeed nonetheless (Waxman et al., 2003). Also, the lens of resilience is being incorporated into education to understand the processes and structures within and outside school which interact with each other such that children who are at risk develop positive outcomes nonetheless (Waxman et al., 2003). The study of resilience in education therefore is believed to be critical in improving the education of children who are at risk of experiencing educational failure in schools (Waxman et al., 2003). By adopting a framework which examines why some OVC are successful in school while some

of their OVC counterparts are not, it is believed that educators and others could gain insights into factors that enable positive development in children from marginalised groups. Armed with that knowledge, educators and other professionals who are geared towards supporting inclusive education for OVC can design and develop more effective educational interventions that will promote the educational and social inclusion for OVC.

Early research on educational resilience adopted the approach that educational resilience in children from vulnerable groups emanates from protective factors which were intrinsic to the individual child (Werner, 2003). According to Werner (2003), resilience in education for children was often characterised by temperamental characteristics that elicited positive responses from their caregivers. At an early age, their mothers tended to characterize them as active, affectionate, cuddly, good natured, friendly and independent and as they grow older they emitted traits of optimism, goal-oriented, self-direction in school (Werner, 2003).

Much research in educational resilience has shifted from the risks that children from vulnerable groups face to the factors which promote their resilience in education (Ungar, 2012). The “what” part of resilience in the education of children has in recent years been replaced by the “how”, which is an area that looks into protective factors that enable educational resilience in children from marginalised groups (Doll, 2013). Further developments in resilience have shifted the focus from intrinsic traits as factors that determine educational resilience to external factors as the major contributors to OVC resilience in education. They have moved away from the medical model (of disability) which views incapacity in humans as a ‘within’ the child problem (Miles & Singal, 2010), an approach that is highly associated with exclusion. Further developments in resilience are inclined towards the social model (of disability) which sees the environment rather than the child as a problem (Armstrong et al., 2011). The social model assumes an inclusive nature whereby focus is on reconstructing the environment such that barriers to learning and participation for children are removed (Armstrong et al., 2011). From this discussions, the similarities between the frameworks of inclusive education and resilience are apparent. Both the resilience theory and inclusive education theory view the environment as a critical component in ensuring the wellbeing and inclusion of OVC.

Researchers in more recent studies reveal that educational resilience in OVC is embedded in a plethora of factors within the school set up. Doll (2013), argues that resilience in OVC is not only about how they can pull themselves up from adverse situations, but it is more about the personal interactions that take place between OVC and adults and OVC and other children in

the communities in which they live, including the school. Similarly, inclusive education also entails how children are supported by their teachers (through positive attitudes and inclusive classroom practices), members of the community and their friends so that they are able to participate in learning (UNESCO,1994). Resilient classrooms just like inclusive classrooms are characterised by supportive relationships whereby teachers create an environment in which OVC feel safe and cared for, where the relationship between OVC and other children in the classroom is positive and whereby the nature of the relationship between the classroom and OVC family is nurtured (Doll, 2013). Based on how resilient education and inclusive education have been accounted for by Doll (2013) and UNESCO (1994), this study argues that resilient classrooms are inclusive classrooms. The similarities and overlaps between resilient education and inclusive education show a binary relationship that leads to this study hypothesising that resilient education is rooted in inclusive education. It is when teachers listen to and treat all children with respect, promote a sense of determination, commitment and self-worth in OVC (Cahill et al., 2015) that resilience in OVC manifests. As teachers take a personal interest and provide surrogate parenting by listening and being available to OVC such that they have someone they can confide in, their resilience and consequently, inclusive education is expedited (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017).

Cohen (2013) on the other hand believes that it is the climate of the entire school rather than that of the classroom which plays a critical role in ensuring educational resilience in OVC. The school climate refers to the quality and character of the school; it is about the values, norms and goals of the school in its entirety (Cohen, 2013). It encompasses the teaching practices, leadership principles and relationships between all stakeholders within the school and the community in which the school is situated (Cohen, 2013). According to Cohen (2013), educational resilience in OVC is enhanced if schools promote a positive school climate by ensuring that there are policies in place which aim at developing skills and knowledge that will enhance educational resilience; ensure physical, emotional and social safety; respect diversity of all within the school and create a sense of belonging for all. This approach is similar to that of the whole school approach proposed by Janney and Snell, (2013) with regards to inclusive education. According to these authors, inclusive education is not only about what happens in the classroom, but it is a process that concerns itself with what happens in the entire school. It is about how the whole school develops a culture that promotes democracy, equality, difference and has high expectations and believes that all students are capable of learning and contributing regardless of who they are or where they come from (Janney & Snell, 2013).

The view that the school climate is a determining factor of educational resilience in OVC is also supported by a study conducted by Reyes et al. (2013). This study highlighted that a school environment that is structured, safe and predictable is most likely to contribute towards academic resilience in OVC (Reyes et al., 2013). Schools that are chaotic and lack a sense of direction often put stress on teachers and when teachers experience stress, their availability is reduced and as a result their attachment to and relationships with OVC is negatively affected (Reyes et al., 2013). Furthermore, when teachers are stressed, the ability for them to model social and emotional competencies that enhance resilience in OVC is minimised (Fleming et al., 2013). Additionally, when teachers themselves lack resilience, their low self-efficacy results in less effective teaching practices which impact negatively on OVC school achievement, motivation and self-efficacy (Fleming et al., 2013). In the same way, when teachers lack the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to support children from marginalised groups (including OVC), the ability for them to promote inclusive education is obviated (Slee, 2011). Supporting teacher resilience therefore is key in ensuring that OVC are able to experience resilience and that inclusive education succeeds.

Educational resilience in OVC is also enhanced when the pedagogy promotes the teaching of life skills through a culturally relevant approach (Richards et al., 2007). Teachers need to be culturally responsive by taking into consideration the background from which OVC come, and by utilising teaching materials and examples that include rather than exclude OVC (Richards et al., 2007). In addition, Lui (2017) notes that since schools aim at teaching skills that enhance human development, they play an important role in nurturing the basically protective internal resources such as self-directive, intelligence, and self-efficiency. Ensuring that pedagogy is inclusive of culturally relevant social and emotional learning programmes which enhance resilience in all children, especially in OVC is of paramount importance (Cahill et al., 2015). When teachers modify the curriculum such that it imparts skills that OVC need in a culturally relevant manner, they stand a better chance of engaging OVC in learning and in helping them develop problem solving skills such that they become an active rather than passive influence in their own lives (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012; Newman, 2000). Cahill et al., (2015) conclude that OVC who participate in social and emotional programmes showed improved educational outcomes, established more affirmative social behaviour and were less likely to engage in risky and disruptive compartment. From these authors' observations, it is paramount that resilience and inclusive education are interlinked. As discussed in Chapter 2, inclusive pedagogy is also a feature of inclusive education. Like educational resilience, it entails modifying the curriculum

such that all children including OVC, are able to attain the necessary learning outcomes. In inclusive education, the curriculum is modified such that it takes into cognisance the social experiences, different culture and traditions within the communities so that all learners are able to access and participate in learning (Morgan & Houghton, 2011). Evidently, inclusive education becomes the basis on which educational resilience flourishes.

Educational resilience is also promoted when schools offer culturally-embedded extra-curricular activities such as religious services during school hours. Thwala (2013) notes that OVC's resilience is advanced when they are offered opportunities to pray and listen to bible readings from adults or fellow learners. In a study conducted by Thwala (2013), children revealed that offering religious programmes like the church services in school enabled them to cope with the grief and hardship they endured as OVC. From the afore-given views, it is evident that offering activities that contradict risk will help counteract the conviction that risk is always present in the lives of OVC (Newman, 2000). However, while the church and prayer services offered in school have been said to enhance resilience, Ungar (2008), contests that, religion means different things to different people. Given that while OVC maybe from the same community, they are not all part of the same religion. It therefore cannot be said with certainty that consistent attendance at one particular place of worship, prayer and listening to bible readings is an equally important aspect of resilience in all OVC (Ungar, 2008).

Scholars who have looked into educational resilience note that schools are part of, and an extension to the communities in which they are located (UNICEF, 1994). This means that the community in which the school is situated plays a significant role in promoting or prohibiting educational resilience in OVC. Communities which share the vision of the school and support the school in promoting the culture of educational success in all the children enhance the resolve in OVC to stay in school (Reyes et al., 2013). Conversely, schools which respect and incorporate the culture of the local community into teaching and learning promote educational resilience in OVC (Reyes et al., 2013). When schools fail to incorporate the values and the culture of the local community, OVC may feel disconnected to the learning process, which might eventually weaken their ability to stay in education (Reyes et al., 2013). The importance of having schools and the communities in which they are situated have a strong relationship where one institution mirrors the values and goals of the other is therefore critical in creating a foundation for educational resilience in OVC. As argued by Göransson, K., & Nilholm (2014), inclusive education aligns itself with the notion of "community" (2014, p. 270). It concerns itself with the situation of the group rather than the individual (Göransson, K., & Nilholm,

2014). According to these authors, it is this approach (inclusive education as a creation of communities) that creates a foundation for other perspectives of inclusive education to emerge.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

This chapter explored resilience as the framework that supports this study. The theory of resilience as highlighted in the discussions, positions OVC as agents who are able to contribute to their transformation. It is a theory that situates OVC as children who experience significant hardship but whose progression is not determined by the negative experiences they encounter. Although it is a process that has its roots in ecological studies, it comes forth as a framework that could inform OVC strength and progress in the midst of adversity. This chapter has also touched on critical aspects of protection for OVC. The relationships and connectedness they have with others is highlighted as critical in ensuring that OVC remain resilient in adverse circumstances. Also, the availability of other material, legal and ideological resources is necessary to buffer the risks that might eventually hinder the inclusion of OVC. As a result, resilience as a framework has not only enabled insights into the challenges encountered by OVC, but it has also brought to surface protective resources which could be harnessed to provide all children who are at risk of adversity with proficiencies to deal with current and on-coming challenges. Additionally, this chapter has made some pertinent assumptions with regards to resilience and inclusive education. The significant overlaps between educational resilience and inclusive education has prompted this study to infer that educational resilience and inclusive education are binary concepts which are pertinent to the theory of resilience. The binary relationship between these two concepts (as unveiled in the discussions) shows the multiple levelness of inclusive education. It shows that inclusive education is not a linear process, but one that operates within a web of other concepts, theories and philosophies and as a result, should be utilised within the context of other theories.

The next chapter discusses the methodology utilised in investigating the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Methodology refers to the systematic and purposeful strategies and procedures which a researcher uses to collect and analyse data pertaining to the phenomenon under investigation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This chapter discusses those strategies and procedures which I utilised as a researcher to arrive at knowledge pertaining to how the lived social experiences of OVC indicate their inclusion or exclusion from education. In this chapter, I discuss how I collected and analysed data that answer the research questions. I also deliberate on the research design, sampling processes, and the ethical considerations.

##### **4.1.1 Qualitative Research Design**

This research took on a qualitative design. A qualitative design was adopted for this study because of how it allowed for me to examine OVC's experiences by using interactive methods that brought to surface the way they interpreted and gave meaning to the social experiences they encountered with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education (Hennink et al., 2011). Also, this study aimed at investigating the experiences of OVC in the context in which they lived and not in controlled laboratory-like settings. Thus, adopting an approach that would allow for examining OVC in their usual surroundings where the occurrence under investigation unfolds naturally (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), was paramount. For the reason that this research aimed at looking into the social experiences of OVC in their communities and schools where they live, the qualitative design therefore was ideal.

Furthermore, the aim of this study was not to find the absolute "truth" on the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. Rather, it was to bring forth the various insights on the phenomenon under discussion by allowing multiple participants to give their version of truth on the experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. Consequently, adopting the qualitative approach allowed for multiple realities which individual participants might interpret in their communities (Savenye & Robinson, 2004). For the reason that this study is concerned with gaining insights

into the experiences of multiple participants, there cannot be one “truth”; rather each participant gave an account on the phenomenon under investigation.

A qualitative approach was also adopted because of how it utilises non-standardised, adaptable procedures to generate data which are sensitive to the social context of the participants (Ormston et al., 2013). Its flexibility when investigating components such as emotions, judgements, perceptions, and feelings which cannot be interpreted through standardised experimental designs was seen as the most appropriate approach to reveal more insights pertaining to the phenomenon that this study aimed at researching. Furthermore, a qualitative approach enabled me as the researcher to explore the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion into or exclusion from education using a variety of procedures. By adopting the qualitative approach, I was able to explore the issue of interest using a variety of lenses through which various aspects of the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion into or exclusion from education emerged (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

A qualitative design is characterised by the researcher assuming an active role in the acquisition of knowledge. According to Merriam (1998), when utilising a qualitative design, the researcher becomes immersed in interpreting what happens within the social settings. This means that the views of the participants are filtered through by the views of the researcher, such that the research becomes a product whereby knowledge on the phenomenon under investigation is seen through the lens of the researcher. This approach to research is in contrast with the quantitative design which projects that in the acquisition of knowledge, the researcher is preferably an objective observer who neither participates nor influences the process of research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). A qualitative approach best suited this research because it allowed for me to be actively engaged in meaningful conversations with the participants, consequently, being able to interpret how the social experiences of OVC reflected their inclusion or exclusion from education. Through utilising the qualitative approach, I was able to interpret non-verbal cues as gestures, tone of the voice, change in expressions and other body language components which convey messages that form part of knowledge. Seeing participants bang tables, hearing the quiver in their voices or seeing their eyes mist over enabled me to interpret the feelings of the participants pertaining to the phenomenon under investigation. Consequently, being immersed in interpreting what was being said and the reactions of the participants enabled a better understanding of the social experiences of OVC.

### **4.1.2 Research Paradigm**

The worldview that I adopted in this study was that of interpretivism. The main objective of this study was to look into how the lived-social experiences of OVC in Eswatini indicted their inclusion in, or exclusion from education. The objective was not to view these social experiences in isolation, but in relation to what happens around OVC in their communities. made sense of their reality and the meanings they attached to their social experiences, not in isolation but in relation to what happens around them in their communities. Based on Bryman (2001)'s argument that the interpretivist paradigm enables the exploration of a phenomenon of interest in relation to the environment in which it occurs, the interpretivism was the most appropriate lens to view the social experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion to education.

Ontologically, interpretivism assumes that knowledge is about how people understand their social worlds in their natural settings (Thomas, 2010). Reality in the interpretivist paradigm entails how people understand and interpret a phenomenon in daily routines and conversations as they relate to other social actors around them (Morrison, 2000). As a paradigm, it proposes that the experiences which people under-go are understood through the “mental processes of interpretation that is influenced by interaction with social contexts” (Yin, 1994, p. 44). Thus, this research viewed OVC experiences and their impacts in terms of resilience and agency as realities which are not realised in isolation. Rather, their experiences are intertwined with what happens around them hence their interpretation of the experiences they encounter is based on how they relate to other members within their communities. The interpretivist approach therefore enabled a co-construction of how OVC understood their experiences from the daily encounters that they had with others, be it in their social or educational networks within their communities.

Furthermore, this study hypothesised that the experiences of OVC are influenced by other variants such as culture, feelings and thoughts which, because of their unpredictable nature cannot be fitted into existing laws or reduced to simplistic interpretations (Cohen, Marion and Morrison, 2000). Given that each OVC's experience is unique to them and cannot be always compared to the experiences of another, adopting a the interpretivist paradigm was appropriate given that there is no one single “reality” but rather multiple realities (Willis,1995), and human experiences and interactions, including peoples' perceptions, interpretations and views, vary from one individual to the next (Thomas, 2010). By adopting this stance, this study was able

to reveal how multiple OVC encountered different challenges and how those OVC, each in their own way, navigated those challenges. It is by through viewing these experiences through the interpretivist lens that the study came to the conclusion that OVC experiences are characterised by multiple “truths” where each child encounters a particular experience differently from the other and navigates those experiences differently from other OVC.

Furthermore, interpretivists claim that there is no single route to obtaining knowledge (Willis, 1995). Unlike positivists who claim that knowledge can only be arrived at through empirical observation and experimentation, interpretivists believe that knowledge can be obtained through observation and interpretation (Philips, 2000). With interpretivism, a researcher will acquire knowledge by collecting information through multiple modes of social interpretations and make inferences by making meaning of what people say about their experiences (Thomas, 2010). Consequently, situating this research in the interpretivist paradigm enabled me as the researcher to use multiple, flexible methods to arrive at knowledge on the phenomena under investigation.

Lastly, the study aimed to explore the experiences OVC through listening to the voices of the participants. Interpretivism is an approach that supports research that is concerned with the “voices” of participants. The interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to “treat the people that we study as human beings and try to gain access to their experiences and perceptions by listening to them and observing” (Bryman, 2001, p. 7). It is through the acts of listening and observing the actions and expressions of the participants that as a researcher, I was able to interpret and understand how OVC make meaning of their social experiences on their inclusion or exclusion from education.

#### **4.1.3 The Critical Communicative Methodology**

The study also incorporated the Critical Communicative Methodology as a component of the qualitative design. I employed the Critical Communicative Methodology (CCM) as a methodology through which I attempted to ascertain how people (including OVC) make sense of the everyday social experiences of OVC with regard to education.

The Critical Communicative Methodology (CCM) is an approach that is hermeneutic in nature. It is a methodology that is grounded in the communicative perspective of reality, with emphasis on knowledge being acquired through social interactions and dialogue (Gómez et al., 2011). The CCM has been effective in analysing educational inequalities by ensuring the inclusion of

different voices in education in order to generate significant investigation of social reality and produce usable knowledge (Puigvert et al., 2012). According to Puigvert et al. the CCM “aims to include all voices in the social science research and to account for the perspective of vulnerable groups” (2012, p. 517). One of the major objectives of this research was to provide a forum through which the voices of OVC (which is one of the vulnerable groups in society) would be included. Adopting the CCM befitted this research in that this approach ensured that the voices of OVC as vulnerable and marginalised beings were apparent.

Furthermore, the CCM is based on the epistemological assumptions that social science is a result of dialogue which can lead to change through communicative action. The CCM is founded on the views of Habermas (1984) and Pato (2006) who believed that every person has the right and the critical capacity to offer an argument and analyse reality using their own speaking style and their own language (Gómez et. al., 2011). To this view, Freire (1998, in Gómez 2011) adds that, through the CCM, social actors are able to problematize their worlds and think critically on how they can be empowered. One of the objectives of this study was to establish how OVC thought they could be supported such that they are able to experience the transformation they desired. By utilising the CCM as part of the research methodology to this study, this question was addressed in that OVC were able to analyse their experiences and reveal how they can be empowered through effective support strategies to ensure their inclusion education.

#### **4.1.4 Voice Research**

Qualitative research is interactive and often takes place face-to-face whereby the researcher uses various strategies to communicate with the participants to obtain data that will address the topic under investigation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Voice research is one of the strategies through which a researcher is able to get statements which constitute knowledge directly from individuals who have been “statutorily defined [as the] person who has the right to make them” (Foucault, 1970, p. 51). Utilizing voice research therefore was appropriate for this study because central to this study was listening to the voices of those who were knowledgeable on the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. This study asked questions like “How did OVC (and others) suggest that current support structures in school and in the community be improved as a strategy for ameliorating OVC vulnerabilities?” which required the voices of the participants to be audible.

Adopting voice research therefore allowed for the participants to voice their views in response to such questions.

Furthermore, since this study is embedded in the concept of inclusion, incorporating the voices of children who were knowledgeable on the social experiences of OVC was seen as an inclusionary approach to research. Inclusion speaks to conducting research with children rather than on children (Kellet, 2010). Operating within a paradigm that encourages listening to the voices of children therefore becomes an inclusionary approach whereby children are given the platform to speak up on matters pertaining to their own lives.

The following section discusses the tools that were used in collecting data.

#### **4.2 Data Collection Tools**

This research utilised a multimodal approach, whereby more than one data collection tool was utilised in the collection of data. For the reason that a multimodal approach to research enables the utilisation of a variety of approaches and tools to investigate a given phenomenon (Reavey & Prosser, 2012), as a researcher, I was able to use a variety of approaches and tools to investigate and gain more insight into the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. Additionally, adopting the multimodal approach enabled the creation of a richer picture of the social experiences of OVC because it enabled the participants to use an array of methods through which they could best express their experiences (Walton, 2011). The data collection tools that were utilised in this research were questionnaires, a “message in a bottle” technique and semi-structured interviews, which will be discussed in detail in the next section.

Lastly, adopting an approach that utilizes multiple methods enabled me as the researcher to corroborate data and ascertain credibility (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Utilising the different approaches to arrive at knowledge on the social experiences of OVC enabled me to compare and contrast data generated through a variety of instruments, and eventually make conclusions informed by findings revealed through more than one method. Also, by utilizing a multiple-methods approach, I was able to obtain insights which could not otherwise have been included in the findings. For instance, insights on the engagement in illegal trade in marijuana was brought to the fore after I did some probing and given assurance to the teacher that I would not disclose the information on those OVC who engaged in marijuana trade to the police or anyone else. These insights were only brought to the fore during an interview with one of the

Guidance and Counselling teachers and nowhere else. Clearly, utilising different methods enabled me to gain deeper insights into the experiences of OVC.

The different methods which were utilised in this study are discussed in the sub-sections below.

#### **4.2.1 Questionnaires**

One of the methods utilised to collect data for this study was open-ended questionnaires. As a researcher, I envisaged that while some children can be eager to express their views in group or through individual interviews, other children may be shy and reserved, preferring to contribute through writing down their views; a view supported by Clark (2005). For this reason, using questionnaires enabled those participants who preferred a structured non-verbal form of communication to share their views through this method of writing. Also, using open-ended questions rather than 'yes' or 'no' questions gave the participants an opportunity to express their views without being prompted or guided as they would be with closed-questions, as suggested by Siniscalco and Auriat (2005). By providing enough spaces to write their responses, the questionnaires gave the participants an opportunity to give some detail on the answers that they provided. In this manner, the participants were free to communicate what they actually wanted to say without being prompted or encouraged to give answers that I could have possibly wanted to hear as the researcher.

The questionnaires consisted of twenty questions which the learner participants had to answer. They started off by asking general questions which included the age of the participant and whom the participant lived with. They then moved on to ask questions specific to the experiences of OVC that participants could answer in spaces of five lines. These included questions like: What problems do you as a child or other children who have lost a parent(s), live in endangered settings, experience emotional or social shortages encounter in the community? (see Appendix 1). This exercise (filling in of the questionnaires) took thirty to forty-five minutes.

To ensure effectiveness in collecting the data needed to answer the research questions, the questionnaires were piloted by asking two children who had just completed high school to fill in the questionnaires. Piloting the questionnaires before the actual data collection, enabled me to check if the questions were clear, unambiguous and if the participants would be able to interpret the questions in the anticipated manner (Munn & Drever, 1990). I was able to make a few adjustments where there was need before the actual disbursement of the questionnaires.

While the use of the questionnaires was ideal for some learner participants, I noted that the use of this method prevented me from gaining insights through observing body gestures, facial expressions or the tone of voice from the participants, which are elements that could have provided more insight on how the participant feel about the phenomenon under discussion. As I administered the questionnaires, there would be occasional chit-chat amongst the participants, which would be followed by giggles or shaking of heads from some of the participants. Other participants would stop writing and look into space for a sometime and I would wish at that point to know more about what was going on in their minds or why there were giggles or shaking of heads.

#### **4.2.2 A 'Message in a bottle'**

The 'message in a bottle' is another data collection method which I utilised to collect data for this study (see Appendix 2). The 'message in a bottle' is a method that prompts children and young people to provide their views in a way that is not threatening to them (Messiou, 2009). It is a strategy that researchers can use to bring to surface examples of marginalisation that children might be experiencing in their communities (Messiou, 2009). In this method, the researcher asks children to write a message about the phenomenon under investigation that would be sent to a friend on another planet (Messiou, 2009). The 'messages' were then put in empty water bottles, and deposited in a box that I took home with me for analysis. With regard to this study, the participating learners were asked to write a message to a friend on another 'planet' in order to tell them about the social experiences of OVC and what they would like to see change in the lives of OVC. Through the messages, my main objective was to deduce how OVC's social experiences show their inclusion or exclusion from education and the transformation that OVC and others wanted to see in the lives of OVC.

The 'message in a bottle' is different from the questionnaires in that it provided the participants with more leverage to write about their experiences without the need to follow a guide and without the confinement of limited writing space. In the 'message in a bottle', the participants were able to write about issues that were of importance to them, rather than what I thought was of importance. By so doing, I was able to gain insight on issues critical to OVC which I might have missed in using guided formatted questions that look for certain specifications from the participants.

### **4.2.3 Individual semi-structured interviews**

In addition to the questionnaires and the ‘message in a bottle’, I also utilised individual semi-structured interviews for the learner participants (see Appendix 3) and teacher participants (see Appendix 4) in order to enable the participants to articulate their thoughts, beliefs and feelings on the phenomenon under investigation. The aim of this study was to examine how the social experiences of OVC impacted their inclusion or exclusion in education. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) argue; if a researcher seeks to understand a phenomenon that pertains to the world and lives of people, they need to engage in conversation with the people who are experiencing that phenomenon. It is for this reason that interviews were adopted as a method that would enable me to engage in conversation with the participants.

By adopting this method, as a researcher, I was able to go on a “journey” that enabled me to uncover knowledge pertaining to the social experiences of OVC through asking questions and encouraging participants to tell their stories (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). As a researcher, I was afforded the opportunity to engage in a verbal exchange where I could draw out information from the participants in an organised and partially structured manner (Longhurst, 2010 in Clifford, French & Valentine, 2010).

Furthermore, the semi-structured interviews utilized were appropriate for this study because of their flexibility and propensity to yield additional information that I as the researcher had not considered (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). As a researcher, I went into this research with the idea that OVC were powerless victims who, because of the adversity they experienced, were unable to achieve an education and wellbeing in general, the way in which other children do. However, from the lengthy conversations which provided the participants with an opportunity to speak freely, some of the concepts such as “hidden” resilience, which I had not anticipated, were unveiled. Evidently, this flexible method enabled different insights and views which altered the course of the study and allowed for a more balanced perspective to emerge.

While semi-structured interviews employ a flexible approach which allows the participant to give lengthy descriptions, these lengthy descriptions may easily derail from the main focus of the research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). To keep the interview on track, I prepared open-ended interview schedules (as shown in Appendix 3 & 4) which contain questions that led the interview in a purposeful yet flexible and casual manner (Fossey et al., 2002).

The interviews were audio-recorded to ensure that all verbal interaction was captured and that material would be available for reliable checks during data presentation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The use of audio-recording enabled me to observe the interviewee freely. I was able to note messages conveyed through body language. Since the participants were sometimes responding to questions by using non-verbal behaviour such as the shaking of the head or pounding of the table which could have been missed if I had focused on writing down everything the participants said. Audio-recording the interview therefore gave me the opportunity to capture the data that was conveyed through body language. I also employed occasional note-taking to supplement the audio-recording of the interviews as proposed by Leedy and Ormrod (2010).

#### **4.2.3.1 Children Interviews**

The interviews with the children participants were held at their school. Clark (2005) observes that children may respond more positively to questions asked by a researcher during an interview if they are in a familiar environment. When asked where they wanted to be interviewed, the learner participants indicated that they would prefer to be in the Guidance and Counselling room. For this reason, permission to conduct the interviews in the Guidance and Counselling room at the children's school was sought from the Guidance and Counselling teacher. It would seem that the Guidance and Counselling room was chosen as the room most appropriate to hold the interviews because the learners were used to talking about their personal experiences to others within that space. Each interview was approximately forty-five minutes long. The interviews took place at a time convenient for the children. This was either during their free period or any other time which was deemed convenient by the learner (outside teaching and learning time).

During the interview, I first spent a few minutes talking about general observations like the weather to create a friendly atmosphere that enabled the establishment of a comfortable relationship with the participant (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I then moved on to asking general questions like "how has the day been for you?", "what are your hobbies" at the beginning of the interview to dismantle the formal constraints that often are a feature of conversation between strangers (Roulston, 2008). I then proceeded to ask questions that were more specific to the experiences of OVC. Questions like: What do people in your community or school say about OVC? And; if you were the community elder in the village, what would

you do for OVC were part of the questions that were more specific to the experiences of OVC (see Appendix 3).

#### **4.2.3.2 Teacher interviews**

The interviews with the teacher participants were held at the school where the Guidance and Counselling teachers worked. The teachers were asked to choose the room in which they preferred to have the interview conducted. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. The teacher interviews like the children's interviews were conducted at a time convenient for the teachers. Polkinhorne (2005) observes that at the first encounter, participants' responses are often restrained because the participants usually have concerns about talking to a stranger. To create a relaxed atmosphere, I started the interview off by talking about general issues such as the location and the distance to the school from where I came from. I also spoke of the weather on that particular day of the interview. The teacher participants were then asked general questions such as "how has the day been for you so far?", "what do you enjoy most about your work", (see Appendix 4). I then proceeded to ask questions that were specific to that revealed the teacher participants' demographics and eventually, questions like: Can you tell me about some of the experiences that OVC report to have encountered generally? Which were more specific to the experiences of OVC were asked (see Appendix 4).

### **4.3 Sampling**

Burgess (1982) argues that sampling is about the selection of key components such as the research site, the people who are key informants to the investigation, time and events critical to the investigation. This section therefore discusses who was selected, how they were selected, when they were selected and the site from which they were selected.

The sampling method which I utilised in selecting the participants and research sites was purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling refers to the process whereby a researcher chooses a population or site from which he or she is most likely to learn more about the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 2001). Patton (1990) stipulates that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance for the purpose of the research" (Patton as cited in Merriam, 2010, p. 61).

### **4.3.1 Sampling for children participants**

This research selected the voices of a whole class of children with the highest number of OVC in one of the local schools in the Manzini region of Eswatini. This was a group of fifty learner participants of whom 46 were OVC. These participants were Grade 11 (Form 4) learners in a high school with the highest number of OVC in the Manzini region. While the research aimed to listen to the voices of OVC on their social experiences with regard to inclusion or exclusion from education, selecting them as individuals was avoided because it would promote labelling and stigmatisation in the school (Walton, 2011). To avoid additional categorisation of OVC in the school, I adopted the “whole class approach” (Walton, 2011) as the main strategy of collecting data from the children. The whole class approach is a strategy that a researcher can utilise if he or she wants to minimise further stigmatisation and labelling of children from minority groups because the researcher involves “all” and not “some” children (Walton, 2011). Additionally, the whole class approach has the ‘safety in numbers’ aspect (Kellett, 2010), whereby children feel comfortable to participate in activities because the whole group is participating in the activity. Furthermore, the whole group approach provided insights to a wider range of views as indicated by Walton (2011). From the findings of this study, I noted that some OVC participants often did not divulge certain experiences which they felt too embarrassed to be associated with. Such insights were brought to the fore through the voices of the non-OVC participants. Evidently, using the whole class approach made OVC feel less targeted as a ‘different’ group while at the same time deeper insight was achieved as more children were voicing their views.

There were fifty children who participated in the questionnaire and ‘message in a bottle’ data collection. Of the fifty learner participants, six children volunteered to participate in the individual semi-structured interviews. The group of participants were high school children and not primary school children. This is because unlike younger children, older children (in the late adolescent stage) have a longer attention span and provide more reliable answers than children of younger ages (Leeuw, 2011). For this reason, I approached a class that has children in the late adolescent stage (16-18) who because of their age, are more likely to offer sincere responses (Leeuw, 2011).

### **4.3.2 Sampling for teacher participants**

Although the research was driven by the intent to listen to the voices of older children, teachers were also invited to be part of this research. Learners spend much of their time within the learning environment, constantly in direct contact with the teachers almost on an everyday basis. The amount of time teachers and children spend together in school fosters the creation of relationships between the children and the teachers, which may enable the teachers to gain insights into the daily experiences of children. For this reason, teachers were viewed as information-rich sources that could add more insight to the phenomenon under exploration.

The teachers who were invited to participate in the study were purposefully selected in that while they taught other subjects, they were also Guidance and Counselling teachers who have been in Guidance and Counselling for more than three years in their respective schools. According to Mikaye (2012), Guidance and Counselling teachers in schools have been introduced as a support strategy to assist learners in overcoming the number of challenges they experience at home and at school. The aforementioned argument implies that Guidance and Counselling teachers are the ones with whom learners are most likely to share their experiences, hence as envisaged by this study, they were data-rich sources for the social experiences of OVC pertaining their inclusion or exclusion from education. Unlike in the case of the learners, the Guidance and Counselling teacher participants were from four different schools in the four different regions of Eswatini.

In choosing the teacher participants, I purposefully invited in-service teachers who had been appointed as Guidance and Counselling teachers in their respective schools. While these teachers already had a teaching qualification, they were pursuing a diploma in Special and Inclusive Education at the university in which I teach. These teachers did not teach at the school in which the OVC participants were. Although these teachers were enrolled in the Special and Inclusive Education Programme at the university, they were not part of the students that I taught. To ensure that there is no conflict of interest, I purposefully invited a group of teachers with whom I did not have a module. I approached one group of teachers from the university after they had their lessons. I provided this group with information on the research to be conducted. I told them that although the study centres on listening to the views of children, their contributions as teachers would be significant to the study. I mentioned to the group of teachers that the study will specifically engage the voices of Guidance and Counselling teachers

who have taught for more than three years at the school. The teachers were then invited to sign up for participation once they choose to be part of the research.

#### **4.4 Research sites**

Before a researcher conducts research, he or she has to choose the site where he or she is most likely to gain more knowledge on the phenomenon under investigation. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), in order for a researcher to acquire knowledge, she/he must selectively choose the site which is most likely to produce data that will answer the research questions. This sub-section will discuss the sites from which the data that answers the research questions was collected.

##### **4.4.1 Research site for children participants**

Although the qualitative approach to research views knowledge to be within the participant and not at a particular site per-se (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), it is important that the researcher chooses a site that is related and applicable to the research problem and purpose (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The site from which the researcher gains insight into the phenomenon he/she is investigating therefore becomes the logical source of knowledge that answers the questions asked by the research (Foucault, 1970). Schools are sites where children spend a significant amount of their time engaged in activities that will enable them to obtain an education. Due to children spending most of their time in these structured and governed institutions, the schools become one of the most legitimate places where knowledge pertaining to the inclusion or exclusion of particular groups in education is generated. For this reason, the school was identified as the most appropriate site to explore the social experiences of OVC relating to their inclusion or exclusion from education.

Furthermore, qualitative researchers look for settings where the phenomenon under investigation is apparent (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). They look for sites where the participants actually experience the phenomenon under investigation. For this reason, the children participants were a class of students with the highest number of OVC in one of the high schools in the Manzini Region in Eswatini. The ages of the children were between 16-18 years old. At the inception of the study, the Manzini Region was identified as one of the regions with the highest number of OVC in Eswatini, (UNICEF, 2013). The following table shows the distribution of OVC in the four regions of Eswatini then (Swaziland Country Operational Plan, 2016).

**Table 1. Distribution of OVC in the four regions of Eswatini**

| Region     | Estimated number of Orphans |
|------------|-----------------------------|
| Manzini    | 66,600                      |
| Hhohho     | 50,295                      |
| Lubombo    | 53,837                      |
| Shiselweni | 47,787                      |

The above table shows that the Manzini Region had the highest number of OVC in Eswatini. The participants from a high school with the highest number of OVC in the senior (a form four) class in the Manzini Region were purposefully selected because having more OVC in this class meant that most of the participants would be OVC. Having most of the participants being OVC provides direct insights into the experiences of OVC with regards to the phenomenon under investigation.

#### **4.4.2 Research sites for teacher participants**

Unlike in the case of the learners, the teacher participants were from four different schools in the four different regions of Eswatini. This means that there was one teacher from each of the different schools in each of the regions (Manzini, Hhohho, Lubombo and Manzini). While the study did not aim to compare findings from the different regions, inviting teachers from the four regions in Eswatini was done with the anticipation that more insight on the social experiences of OVC from the different regions could be gained. Unlike in the case of the learner participants, travelling to the schools in the different regions to collect data from the teachers was done only once for every teacher.

#### **4.5 Credibility and Trustworthiness**

An important task for the researcher is to persuade an audience that his or her research findings are worth paying attention to (Lincoln & Cuba, 1985). The researcher therefore has a responsibility to ensure that their research is one that is truthful and believable by proving to the reader sufficient information which indicates that the report is authentic. To ensure this, the researcher has to establish strategies that will prove the credibility and trustworthiness of his or her research.

Credibility is defined as “the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy” (Thomas, 2010, p. 319). It is a way of ensuring that the research delineates an authentic representation of the phenomenon under investigation. To ensure that the research is credible, I encouraged honesty and reliable participation from the participants by giving them an opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. By offering participants the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study, as the researcher, I increased the chances of involving only those who are genuinely willing to take part in the research study, and are prepared to offer data voluntarily (Shenton, 2004). Moreover, to encourage truthful responses, the participants were assured that there would be no right or wrong answer, and that every answer that they give will be acceptable and deemed credible (Shenton, 2004). I also ensured that the group I was inviting to participate in this study was in no way part of the students that I teach, so that there would be no expectations of additional marks or any other favours during their study as incentive for participating in the study.

In order to ensure that the study is credible, I used triangulation. Triangulation refers to the process whereby the researcher uses various methods, data sources and data collection strategies to establish whether the same patterns keep recurring (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The various methods that were used to triangulate the data were the individual semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and the ‘message in a bottle’ technique. Additionally, I triangulated via data source. According to Shenton (2004), triangulating via data source is a method in which “Individual viewpoints and experiences can be verified against others and, ultimately a rich picture of attitudes, needs or behaviour of those under scrutiny may be constructed based on the contributions of a range of people” (2004, p. 66). By utilizing the voices of the learners and Guidance and Counselling teachers, I was then able to verify the experiences of OVC such that deeper understandings of their encounters were constructed through a range of participants.

Furthermore, I utilised peer scrutiny as a tactic to enhance credibility. Peer scrutiny refers to the process whereby the researcher allows his or her project to be viewed by colleagues, peers or academics as a way of obtaining feedback to strengthen the research (Shenton, 2004). I constantly liaised with the two thesis supervisors appointed by the University of the Witwatersrand who because of their detachment have an independent perspective and were able to challenge the presuppositions that I made. Additionally, the research proposal was presented at a formal presentation, whereby respondents (appointed by the University of the Witwatersrand) provided feedback on the proposed research. The fresh perspectives held by

the respondents provided feedback that strengthened the research. Moreover, components of the research were presented on numerous occasions at conferences whereby the audience would ask questions and provide feedback that strengthened the research.

## **4.6 Data Analysis**

Hatch (2002) defines data analysis as a way of;

Organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern finding (Hatch, 2002. p. 148).

It is a process that allows the researcher to explain to his or her readers how meaning has been arrived at. This is accomplished through transforming qualitative data collected by the researcher into a narrative that is scholarly and understandable (Froggatt, 2001). This section addresses the processes that were undertaken in analysing the data.

### **4.6.1 The data-analytical framework**

Given the interpretivist position adopted by this study, the nature of the research questions and the methods used in collecting data, the theoretical approach to the analysis of the data was the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Murray and Holmes (2014) define the IPA as a qualitative approach to the analysis of data that looks in detail at how individuals make sense of their social world. It is an approach that is phenomenological in that its focus is on the views of individuals on their lived experiences (Finlay, 2009). As an approach, it assumes that human beings are not passive entities in an objective reality, rather, they create knowledge by interpreting and understanding the world around them in a way that makes sense to them (Griffiths, 2009). Additionally, the IPA projects that the meanings which people attach to their experiences are only obtained through the process of interpretation (Griffiths, 2009). Interpretation of the participants' views in the analysis of data therefore becomes a process whereby the participants offer their understanding of the phenomenon and the researcher tries to comprehend and give meaning to the participants' interpretations of the phenomenon under investigation.

Furthermore, the IPA identifies with hermeneutic principles which recognise the predominant role played by the inquirer in research (Finlay, 2009). Critical to the IPA is the fact that as the researcher, I played a significant role in the interpretation of the data as I became an instrument in the analysis of the data. I engaged in an “interpretive relationship” with the script containing the data collected, whereby I played an active role in making sense of the data (Smith & Osborne 2003; Griffiths, 2009). This interpretive relationship between myself and the transcripts containing data, enabled me to understand the participants’ views on the social experiences of OVC with regard to their inclusion or exclusion from education. Through utilising the IPA, I was able to identify meanings embedded in the participants’ experiences by dividing the data into units which enabled me to identify commonalities, contradictions or differences across a number of the participants’ descriptions (Griffiths, 2009).

The IPA was also adopted as an approach suitable for this study because of how it lends itself to inductive rather than deductive oriented research. This study did not start off with specific themes and conclusions but with the intention to allow the data to generate the relevant themes. By adopting the IPA, I was therefore able to synthesize and make meaning from the data starting with the specific data and ending in categories and patterns such that more general themes emerged (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). From the careful examination and constant comparison of what the participants said during the data collection stage; the categories and themes on the lived social experiences of OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education emerged.

#### **4.6.2 Data analysis procedure**

Given that this study utilised the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the data analytical framework, it follows that particular data analysis procedures were followed whereby the phenomena under investigation were classified. As discussed in Chapter 4, the focus of the IPA is on the views of individuals about their lived experiences (Murray & Holmes, 2014). In this sub-section, working within the IPA framework, I explain how through engaging in an interpretive relationship with the data enabled me to gain a better understanding of the participants’ worldviews. To ensure that the data analysis process was systematic, I utilised Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis approach. The following table (Table 2) illustrates the process followed in analysing the data.

**Table 2. Phases of Thematic Data Analysis**

|   | <b>Phases</b>                      | <b>Description of Analysis Process</b>   |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Familiarising myself with the data | a. Narrative preparation, i.e. transcribing data.<br>b. Reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas (memoing).  |
| 2 | Generating initial codes           | a. Coding pieces of data that seem relevant to research questions in a systematic manner across entire data sets.<br>b. Collating data relevant to each code   |
| 3 | Searching for themes               | a. Collating codes into potential themes<br>b. Gathering all data relevant to each potential code  |
| 4 | Reviewing themes                   | a. Checking if themes work in relation to the codes extracted from the data.<br>b. Checking if themes work in relation to the entire data set.<br>c. Reviewing data to search for additional themes. |
| 5 | Defining and naming themes         | a. On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells<br>b. Generating clear definitions and names for each theme.                                     |
| 6 | Producing the report               | a. Producing the report.   |

Utilising Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic data analysis, I read and reread the participants' responses from the message in a bottle and the questionnaires a few times to make sense of the

data. I also listened to the recordings of the interviews several times and transcribed the contents of the interview. During the process of reading, I would make notes on the transcripts, creating memos that reflected my thoughts, understanding and interpretations of the data. Once I got some understanding of the data, I began looking for words, phrases or sentences that connoted the same idea and put I put those words or phrases into categories which I labelled as codes to the study. Recurring patterns with one major concept were labelled as the main theme while other data that had multiple elements of the concept were labelled as subthemes (Braun &Clarke, 2013). The process of how codes, basic themes, sub-themes and the main themes were generated from the raw data is demonstrated in the following illustration, which provides an example of the data analysis process:

**Figure 3. Development of themes**

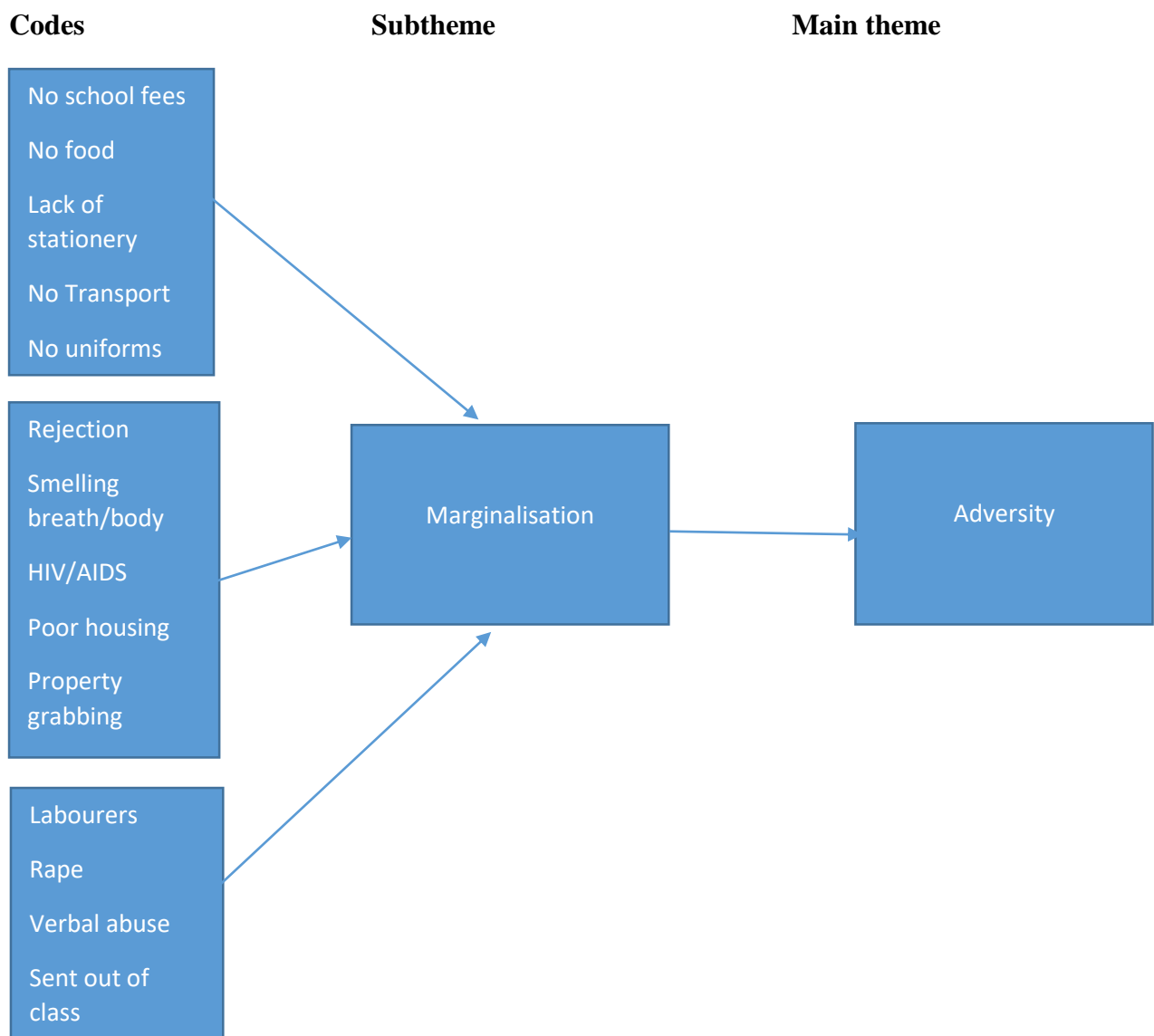


Figure 3 above is an illustration of the data analysis process as carried out in this study. As part of the data analysis, I engaged in a process of gleaning the data by comparing and contrasting information from the participants, looking for insights that were relevant to the study. As I went back and forth with the data, recurring responses and patterns were identified, arranged and classified as codes which eventually allowed for the generation of subthemes and main themes of the study. For example, in the above-given illustration, I started off with going through the data and began identifying common responses of lack, difficulties and problems which I then classified as codes to the study. Further scrutiny by comparing and contrasting the data, reduced the codes to the subtheme of marginalisation, while further compressing of the data eventually generated the theme of adversity as the overarching theme of all the hardships and misfortunes experienced by OVC.

While computer-based data analysis approaches are gaining popularity (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014), I opted to use a more traditional approach known as the *dining-room table* approach (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014) in carrying out the data analysis process. Data coding was done on flip charts which were pasted on the wall in my study. This approach enabled me to view all the codes at the same time. Seeing the data spread out in its entirety provided me with an opportunity to compare and contrast the codes and become more familiar with the data which could not have been easily accomplished in a computer-assisted data analysis process (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

#### **4.7 Ethical Considerations**

Every researcher has a responsibility to act ethically when conducting research (Khan et al., 2014). According to Khan et al. (2014), researchers have a “moral and professional obligation...to be ethical even when research participants are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics” (2014, p. 306). This section will discuss how I attempted to ensure that the participants were aware of their rights as research participants and the ways in which their privacy was and will be safeguarded.

As a researcher, I was aware of and concerned about the vulnerability of participants such as those who were involved in my study. As Morrow (2008) argues, research with children raises concerns that require careful consideration from the part of the researcher. According to Von Benzon and van Blerk (2017), children, especially those from marginalised groups are more vulnerable to exploitation by researchers. For this reason, I was careful to follow both the

technical processes that guide ethical research, as well as my own concerns and convictions about how to do research ethically.

As a way of ensuring that my participants were protected and not exploited in any way, I applied for and was granted ethical clearance by the Ethics Committee at the University of the Witwatersrand (see Appendix 5). This was done not only as a requirement by the University but also to ensure that the methods that I would be using and all other processes that I would be engaging in with the children were safe and not exploitive to the children and to other participants in the study. Also to ensure that I respect the guidelines and requirements of conducting research with children and teachers in Eswatini, I wrote a letter requesting permission to conduct research with the children and teacher participants to the Ministry of Education and Training in Eswatini (see Appendix 6). My proposal for the research was sent to the Ministry of Education and Training Principal Secretary who read it to ensure that the research would not encroach on the rights of the learner participants and the teachers in school. After ensuring that the proposed research was in no way harmful to the learners and to the teachers, permission to conduct research in the different schools was granted (see Appendix 7). Additionally, permission to conduct research at the school with the highest number of OVC was requested from the school Principal (see Appendix 8). Within this letter, a request, was also made to the principal to sign the parent/guardian or significant elder consent form for OVC who lived in child-headed families. Furthermore, a letter to the high school principals, requesting permission to conduct research with the Guidance and Counselling teachers in the high schools was also written and submitted to the different school principals at the schools in which the Guidance and Counselling teachers taught (see Appendix 9).

#### **4.7.1 Informed Consent**

Deiner and Crandall (1978) define informed consent as, “the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions” (Deiner & Crandall, as cited in Cohen et al., 2000, p. 51). In the sub-sections that follow, I discuss issues of informed consent as they relate to the participants of this study.

##### **4.7.1.1 Informed consent: Teacher participants**

Powell et al., argue that “consent can only be given if the participants are informed about and have an understanding of the research. It [is something that] must be given voluntarily and

without coercion” (Powell et al., 2012, p. 1). For this reason, once the potential participants were identified, I gave them a letter, inviting them to participate in the study (see Appendix 10). While the letter indicated what the study was about, I also verbally explained to them what the study was about so that they had an understanding of the study before they made their decision. The teacher participants were told that they were being invited and not coerced to participate in the study; hence participation was voluntary. They were made aware that they had the right to refuse to participate in the study. They were also told that they could withdraw from the study at any time and this will not have any repercussions, financially or legally. The teachers were also given the opportunity to think about their responses for two weeks. At the end of the two weeks, the teachers who accepted the invitation to participate in the research were given a consent form which provided information about the study (see Appendix 11). The teachers were also told that there would be no financial remuneration or incentives of any kind offered to them. I did however explain that to them that I would provide refreshments since they had indicated that they would be available for the interviews during their lunch hour.

#### **4.7.1.2 Informed Consent: Children participants**

Central to this study was listening to the voices of children on the social experiences of OVC on their inclusion or exclusion from education. While I aimed at listening to the voices of children, I was also cautious that children from minority groups are amongst the most vulnerable groups in research Shivayogi (2013). For this reason, I was careful to pay assiduous attention to the general well-being of the learners who were participants in this study. I was also tried to ensure that every participant was safe and that his or her rights were protected (Shivayogi, 2013). As protection to the participants, I also ensured that I respected the child participants by working responsibly and ethically with them during the research process.

While children are “gatekeepers to their own games and discussions, and can allow or deny adult’s participation” (Holt, 2005, p. 19), they are always in the state of becoming adults; hence they remain constrained by the law which operates as a mechanism that preserves the boundaries between childhood and adulthood (James & James, 2001). Consequently, children are not able to make certain decisions without the consent of a significant adult. In respect of this research requirement, the first gatekeeper whose permission I sought was that of the Principal of the high school where the part of the research took place. After identifying the school with the highest number of OVC, I called the Principal via telephone, and requested to have a meeting with him at the school. Upon arrival at the school, I gave the Principal a formal

letter of request and explained the study in detail (as indicated in Appendix 8). I also gave the Principal a week to provide consent or to refuse to allow me to conduct the research with the children at his school. The Principal responded after a week via telephone, granting me permission to conduct research with the learners.

In addition to asking the school Principal for permission, I also asked the guardians or parents of all the children in the class for permission to seek assent from their children so that they can participate in the research (see Appendix 12). The letter written to the parents/guardians was written in both siSwati and English, as they are both official communication languages in Eswatini (Constitution of Swaziland Act, 2005). The parents/guardians were also given a consent form (see Appendix 13) which they would sign and submit after one week of careful consideration if they were allowing their children to be part of the study. The letter and consent form indicated that should the parent/guardian have questions regarding the study, they could contact me on my cell phone or make an appointment to see me the next time I was at the school.

Once the parents or guardians and principal (for the learners who came from child-headed households) gave consent for their children to participate in the study, I explained to the learners that although their parents/guardians or principal have consented to them participating in the research, they (the learners) have the right to assent to participate or to refuse to participate in the research. I then disseminated invitation letters to those children whose parents/guardians or the principal had consented (see Appendix 14). I explained to the learners what the research was about, including what is meant by the term 'OVC'. I also told them of the different ways in which they could participate in the study and how they were not obliged in any way to take part in the study even if their parents had consented. Additionally, the learners were told that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time and they would not be penalized if they decide to do so. I also mentioned to them that the school's Guidance and Counselling teacher will always be at the school when we have our sessions so that if any participant feels the need to stop the interview and see the teacher then they can do so. I then gave the learners who indicated that they wanted to be part of the study consent forms (see Appendix 15) and told them that they could have two weeks to think about participating (or not) in the study.

With regards to learner participants who lived in child-headed families and did not have any significant elderly guardian to assent to their participation, I told them that since the research

would be taking place at the school, they could ask the Principal to sign the parent/guardian/significant adult consent form. In a study conducted by Morrow (2008), it transpired that the head teacher or deputy head teacher as the gatekeeper and custodian for children during school hours is able to give consent to have children take part in research that is based at the school. It is based on this finding that children who came from child-headed families were encouraged to request the school principal to give consent to their participating in the study.

#### **4.8 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is one measure that researchers utilise to ensure that no one has access to the participants' data including their names, except the researcher. Confidentiality guarantees that the identification of the participants and what they have discussed with the researcher remains protected from the public (Cohen et al., 2000). With regards to this study, the participants were assured that all material obtained during the data collection processes would be kept in a locked drawer in my study room, and I would be the only one to have the key to the drawer. They were told that this information would not be accessible to anyone, except in the case where it is required by the university to check for authenticity. All documents and tapes with data would be destroyed after five years.

#### **4.9 Anonymity**

It is also important that participants be assured that what they say cannot be directly traced back to them. Anonymity means ensuring that a link between what was said, and the participant who said it is not possible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In an attempt to maximise anonymity, I did not use the participants' real names during the interview and during the data analysis process, instead pseudonyms were used when referring to the participants and the schools in any written reports or presentations.

While great measures were taken to ensure that the participants remain anonymous, Cohen et al. (2000) argue that there is no absolute guarantee of complete anonymity in as far as research that pertains to life studies is concerned. While this may be the case, it was my responsibility as a researcher to ensure that the participants are not identifiable on print or in any verbal presentations. The name of the school remains unidentifiable and before my research report was released, the participants were given the opportunity to review it so that they had an

opportunity to voice their concerns if they felt that their identity was compromised in any way, as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher, (2010).

#### **4.10 Summary**

This chapter has presented the methodological perspectives and data collecting procedures utilised by the study. The discussions made in this chapter reveal that this study adopted the qualitative design because of its flexibility in acquiring knowledge. Since this study was conducting research with children, a paradigm that allowed for multiple approaches as data was collected was necessary to accommodate the different preferences that children might have. The methodologies used in the acquisition of data were also brought to the fore. The CCM as a methodology that aligns itself to inclusive education because of how it creates a forum for children from marginalised groups to speak on issues relating to their lives was also discussed. Furthermore, this chapter highlighted the data collection methods which were interviews, questionnaires and ‘the message in a bottle’. Having three methods through which the learner participants could share their experiences was the most appropriate approach to acquiring knowledge from a group of children in that it gave the participants the ability to choose which method was the most suitable for them. It aligned to the ethical requirements which speaks to how the rights of the participants to take part in the study should be respected. By having them chose from the array of methods, their right to participate in a manner that was most suitable to them as children was upheld.

In addition to the data collection tools, sampling issues were highlighted and so were issues of credibility and trustworthiness which brought to the fore how this study ensured that this study was truthful and believable. Furthermore, this chapter deliberated on issues of analysis whereby the process through which the themes of this study were generated was brought to the fore. Issues regarding ethics are also highlighted. The measures taken to ensure that the rights of the participants were respected were brought to the fore. Since this is research with children, as a researcher I needed to be more vigilant, sensitive and protective as children, especially those from marginalised groups are amongst the most vulnerable to exploitation in research (Clark, 2005). Outlining the attempts made to ensure that OVC as marginalised children were protected in this research was therefore paramount.

The next chapter provides demographic information relating to the participants and also introduces the main themes of the study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS AND INTRODUCTION TO THE THEMES**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The preceding chapter discussed issues relating to the methodologies and ethical concerns of this study. This chapter provides demographic information relating to the participants and also introduces the main themes of the study. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides demographic information relating to the participants, with the first sub-section providing information on the learner participants while the second sub-section provides general information on the Guidance and Counselling teacher participants. The second section is an introduction of the main themes as they emerged from the analysis of the data obtained from the participants of this study.

#### **5.2 Demographic information**

This subsection discusses the demographic information of the participants, namely: the learner participants and the Guidance and Counselling teacher participants. In this subsection, the participants' information pertaining to age, living arrangements, and education and qualifications (in the case of the teachers) is discussed.

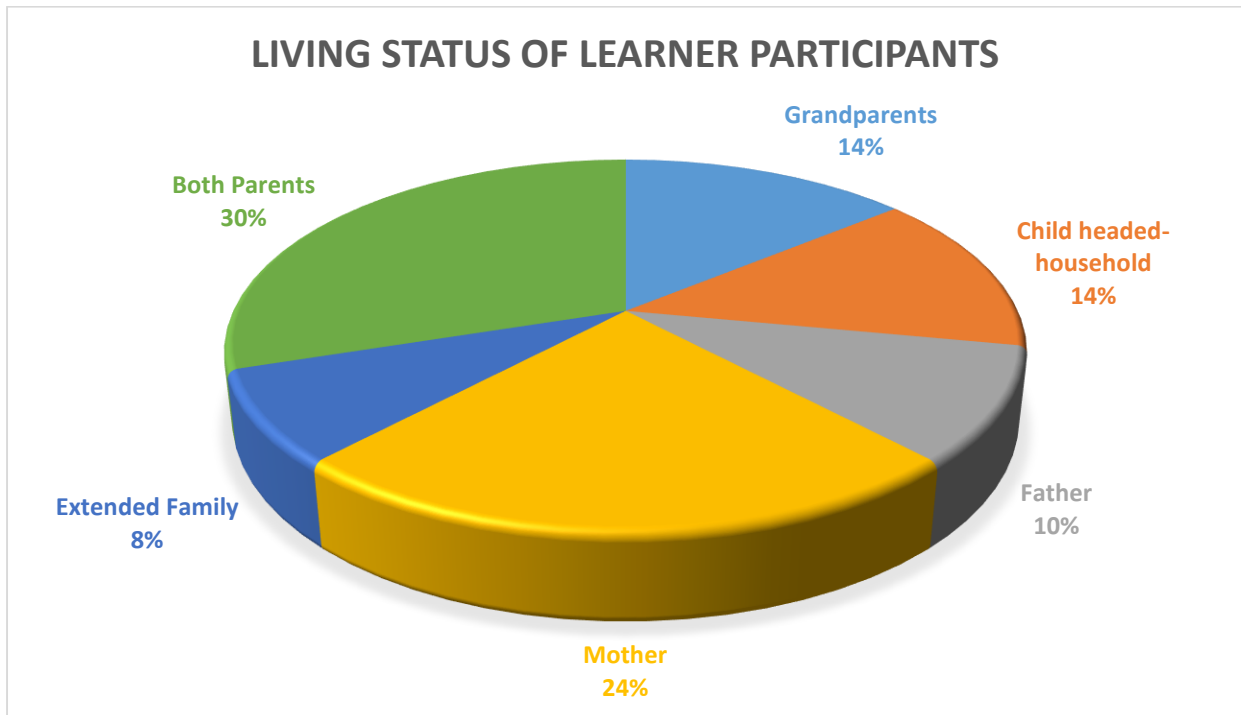
##### **5.2.1 Demographic on the learner participants**

As indicated previously, the learner participants attend a school located in the Manzini region of Eswatini. The school is a high school with the highest number of OVC in the country. As indicated in the methodology chapter, there were fifty participants from Grade 11 (Form 4) who participated through questionnaires and a message in the bottle activity. Of the fifty learner participants, six learners volunteered to take part in individual semi-structured interviews.

###### **5.2.1.1 Learner participant distribution by living arrangements**

As a way of establishing demographic information, the learners were asked to indicate their OVC/non OVC status and to also state whom they lived with. Figure 2 illustrates the learner participants' distribution by their living status:

**Figure 4. Learner participant distribution by living arrangements**



Of the fifty learner participants, thirty-two (64%) reported that they were living with one or both parents, while the remaining eighteen 18 (36%) reported living either in child-headed households, with grandparents, or with members of the extended family. While grandparents constitute members of the extended family, in this illustration, they have been assigned a separate category to show that OVC are more likely to reside with them than with other members of the extended family. It is also important to note that 46 out of 50 learner participants identified as OVC.

While the expectation I had as a researcher was that children who lived with both their parents would not classify themselves as OVC, the responses given by the participants revealed that most of the learners who resided with both parents categorized themselves as OVC. From the participants' responses it was apparent that although some learners lived with both parents, they encountered experiences which made them vulnerable to exclusion from education, hence categorizing themselves as OVC. Some of the learners who lived with both their parents indicated that they categorized themselves as OVC because their parents were unemployed and could not pay for their school fees, while some of the learners stated that while they had both parents, one was sickly (usually the father) and the mother had to look after the ailing husband.

This often resulted in both parents being unable to secure employment, consequently; the parents failed to provide for the learners' basic needs, including their education.

Furthermore, learner participants who lived with only one parent also categorized themselves as OVC. When asked to provide a reason why they self-identified as OVC, the participants revealed that, as children who lived with only one parent, they encountered experiences which increased the likelihood of them not being included in education. Children who had lost a father, or whose fathers were absent from their lives, revealed that their mothers struggled to keep them in school. The learner participants indicated that some of their mothers were vegetable vendors who did not make enough to take care of the needs of all the children under their care. Additionally, it was revealed that single mothers who were vegetable vendors often expected their children to help out with selling vegetables after school and during the weekends. The learner participants revealed that while they realized the importance of helping out their mothers, having to sell vegetables after school and during the weekends impacted negatively on their schooling. The following comment was not uncommon; *“On Saturdays, I have to help my mother sell vegetables at the bus rank, so I can't attend Maths extra lessons offered at school. This makes me get low marks in the tests when the teacher asks questions on what was done on Saturday”* (Learner Participant 37, message in a bottle).

Some learner participants revealed that they lived only with their mothers which made their living unsafe. The following concerns were voiced by one of the learners: *“I live with my mom. My father died and we only stay with my mother. Since we are living in a fatherless home, my biggest worry is our safety. Anything can happen to us at night because we have no one to protect us”* (Learner Participant 23, questionnaires). In addition, for some children, their mothers would be away for long periods of time selling handicraft in neighbouring countries, hence they regarded themselves as OVC.

Furthermore, learner participants whose mothers were absent from their lives also revealed that they encountered experiences which placed them at risk of not being included in education. Some of the learner participants revealed that their fathers were too old to be employed so they could not afford to pay for their school fees and other school related materials. Other learner participants revealed that although they lived with their fathers, life was more difficult for them because of the new women in their fathers' lives. Some of the learner participants reported that they experienced physical and verbal abuse from their fathers and from their fathers' girlfriends or new wives. Additionally, the participants revealed that the absence of a mother in the family

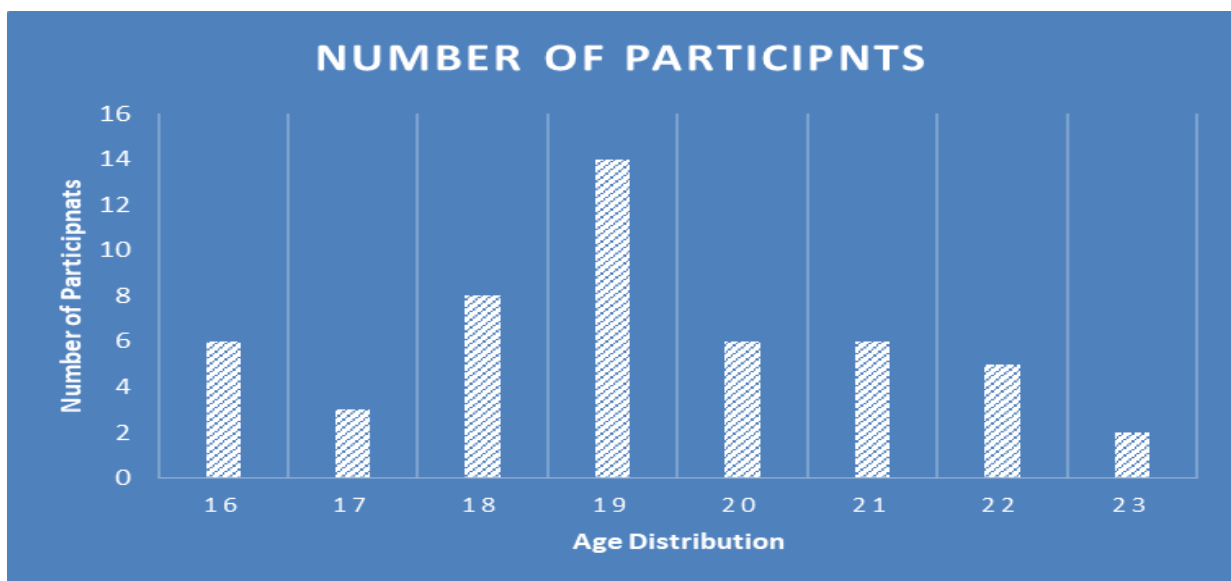
meant that their mother's responsibilities now fell on the children, as a result, those children had to do the cooking, cleaning and taking care of their siblings which eventually had a negative bearing on their education.

As a result of forty-six of the learner participants identifying as OVC, the views and voices reflected in this study are primarily those of OVC. Most of the data presented therefore is characterized by the first-person singular form, indicating that these were experiences encountered mostly by the participants themselves.

### 5.2.1.2 Learner participant distribution by age

Although the objective was to engage learners between sixteen and eighteen years of age in the Grade 11 class, it transpired that the ages of the learner participants ranged from sixteen to twenty-three years of age. The following illustration is a representation of the age distribution of the learners who took part in this research.

**Figure 5. Learner participant distribution by age**



The above-given illustration reflects that 31 (62%) of the learners fall outside the expected age-range of sixteen to eighteen years old. This could be attributed to OVC being less likely than their non-OVC peers to be in the grade appropriate for their age (Olanrewaju et al., 2015). Additionally, OVC usually come from families who experience financial constraints (Chen, 2017). The numerous financial challenges experienced by OVC (as will be discussed in forthcoming chapters), impede their progression from one grade to the next.

Of note is that, having learners who are above the age of eighteen in school, challenges the universal definition that a child is anyone below the age of eighteen (UNICEF, 2017). From the data collected, some of the learner participants who were over the age of eighteen defined themselves as OVC, which suggests that for the learners, a child is anyone who is still in school regardless of their age. Although, the learner participants viewed themselves as children, the data revealed that being above the age of eighteen meant that in their communities, they were expected to assume responsibilities such as having paid work, looking after their siblings or taking care of ailing parents which impacted their education (as will be discussed in the following chapter).

### **5.2.2 Demographic information on the Guidance and Counselling teacher participants**

As detailed in Chapter 4, four Guidance and Counselling teachers from four different schools took part in the study. Each school was located in one of the four different regions of Eswatini. Information about the participating Guidance and Counselling teachers was obtained through individual interviews. The table below shows the gender and the qualifications of the Guidance and Counselling teachers who took part in this study. Additionally, the table shows the number of years they have served as Guidance and Counselling teachers and the additional subjects that the Guidance and Counselling teachers teach at their respective schools.

**Table 3. Demographic information on the Guidance and Counselling teacher participants**

| <b>Name/<br/>Number</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Qualifications</b>   | <b>Experience as a<br/>Guidance and<br/>Counselling<br/>teacher</b> | <b>Additional subjects<br/>taught</b>    |
|-------------------------|---------------|---|---|--|
| Teacher A               | Female        | B.A. Humanities &<br>Post Graduate<br>Certificate in<br>Education                                 | 4   | English Literature &<br>English Language |
| Teacher B               | Female        | B.A. Humanities,<br>Post Graduate<br>Certificate in<br>Education, B.Ed. in<br>Inclusive Education | 5   | English Language &<br>Religious Studies  |
| Teacher C               | Female        | B.A. Humanities,<br>Post Graduate<br>Certificate in<br>Education                                  | 6   | SiSwati Language                         |
| Teacher D               | Male          | Diploma in<br>Education.  | 8   | Maths                                    |

Table 4 above, shows that all teachers who participated in this research had at least four years working experience on issues of Guidance and Counselling; consequently, they are considered to have substantial knowledge of and insights into the experiences of OVC. The information in Table 4 indicates that there were more female Guidance and Counselling teachers who participated in the study than male. During the teacher interviews, there was a general consensus that female teachers made “*better*” Guidance and Counselling teachers than males. According to Guidance and Counselling Teacher C, female teachers made better Guidance and Counselling teachers because they are “*mothers by nature*”. When it was highlighted to

Guidance and Counselling Teacher D that he was the only male in the group of participants, he responded that *“I am not surprised, it seems the female teachers are more favoured as Guidance and Counsellors. I volunteered because no one else was willing to be a Guidance and Counselling teacher. I am also a pastor, so I felt maybe I can help the children since I help others in church”* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher D, interviews).

From the illustration given above (Table 4), it is evident that Guidance and Counselling is an additional responsibility for the teachers. That is, Guidance and Counselling teachers teach their designated subjects and take on Guidance and Counselling as an additional responsibility. Furthermore, from the illustration, it is evident that the Guidance and Counselling teachers do not hold specific qualifications when it comes to guidance and counselling. Guidance and Counselling Teacher D’s comment that, *“I volunteered”*, implies that any teacher in the school can assume the role of being a Guidance and Counselling teacher.

### **5.3 Themes**

The coding of the data eventually produced three main themes. These themes are: Responsible Agency, Relational Agency and Adversity. According to the findings, the social experiences of OVC are characterized by a dynamic and evolving process of inclusion and exclusion. From the themes, a dialectical relationship in which inclusive and excluding structures interact with each other in the process of resilience building, inclusion and exclusion of OVC is evident. The polemical relationship of agency-adversity as revealed by this study, forms the basis for resilience, a theory in which this study is grounded. The interactions between agency as promoting OVC resilience and inclusion, and adversity as undermining OVC strength and inclusion, will be discussed extensively in connection to the literature under the three main themes in the following chapters.

### **5.4 Summary**

This chapter has discussed the participants’ demographics and also introduced the themes that emerged. The first part reveals the demographics of the learner participants. Of special note is that a significant number of the learner participants identify as OVC. This means that the voices that will be audible in the next three chapters, which discuss the findings, are mostly those of OVC. Also, the demographic information, which has been illustrated, bring to the fore the living arrangements of the learner participants. From the observation that some children live in child-headed households, others with grandparents while others live with only one parent, the

study envisages the possible hazards these children may encounter from being situated in risky living arrangements. Also, from the revelation that there are more OVC residing in child-headed households than those residing with members of the extended family, it is envisioned that OVC could be experiencing rejection and a lack of support from members of the family. The second part of the chapter revealed demographic information for the teacher participants. Notably, only one teacher has a qualification in inclusive education and no teacher has a qualification in guidance and counselling. This raises concerns about how OVC are supported by their Guidance and Counselling teachers. The last part of the chapter is an introduction to the themes that were developed from the data collected from the participants. The themes of adversity, responsible agency and relational agency were brought to the fore as those that will be discussed in the following chapters.

The next chapter is a presentation, discussion and analysis of the theme of Adversity

## CHAPTER 6

### ADVERSITY

#### 6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter provided the demographics of the participants and also introduced the themes which were generated from the findings of the study. This chapter is a presentation, analysis and discussion of the theme of **Adversity**. In this chapter, the main findings of the study are presented through data excerpts, analysed and discussed by linking them to current literature and theories.

The findings to this study unveiled that OVC often encountered adversity as a major challenge in their daily lives. Adversity for the purposes of this study refers to the experiences of hardship and misfortune that OVC experience in their daily lives. It speaks to the encounters of deprivation and impoverishment that they encounter as a result of the lack of the familial support they encounter in their state as OVC. These experiences of hardship and misfortune as revealed by the findings have the potential to produce undesirable outcomes by weakening OVC resilience and inclusion in education and in life in general. These life experiences and conditions include; family disruptions, socio-economic disadvantages such as destitution, bereavement, neglect, bullying, humiliation and abuse.

The study revealed the lack of parental networks which often protect children from encountering misfortune and suffering in their childhood was the main reason why OVC seemed to encounter adversity. This view is supported by Killian and Durrheim who argue that, OVC “are in the midst of a whirlwind of adversity” (2008, p. 3). At a time when the global community is advocating for the inclusion of all children in education (UNESCO, 1994), understanding the adversity encountered by OVC is critical for researchers and policy makers as it enables deeper insights on the most relevant policies and practices which could be utilized to minimize the negative effects of adversity on their inclusion and wellbeing (Daniel, 2010). If societies are to promote inclusive education by embracing diversity, creating fairness and ensuring that the learning environment is conducive and supports all learners such that they achieve the best possible outcomes, there needs to be an understanding of how children from minority groups (including OVC) experience adversity (Mowat, 2015).

The study revealed that the adversity they encountered, often resulted in OVC encountering experiences of marginalisation in their daily lives. The findings of this study highlight that; as

a result of experiencing adversity in a state of isolation whereby there usually is no one to soften the adverse experiences they encounter, OVC were often seen as those who were different from others in the society. It transpired that the adversity they encountered which in most cases was financially oriented, resulted in them not being respected nor being valued as members who could participate in their community. According to the findings, adversity resulted in OVC being unable to participate in the on-goings of their society; be it at school or in the community at large. Adversity for them resulted in their not being recognized as members of the society, rather; they are categorized in a state of the ‘*other*’; a state of a second class citizen whose presence is of little or no importance in society. As noted by Killian and Durrheim (2008), adversity, particularly that which is rooted in destitution, contributes significantly to marginalisation.

From the findings of the study, the different structures within society produce two distinct types of marginalisation, namely; educational marginalisation and social marginalisation which will be discussed as subthemes of the theme of adversity. These two subthemes and how they translate to exclusion for OVC will be discussed below.

## **6.2 Educational marginalisation**

This study unveiled that some of the OVC experiences were characterized by significant incidences of relegation with regards to education. The study brought to the fore that because of the destitution they encountered, OVC often experienced occurrences and conditions which may conglomerate to endanger their inclusion in education. These experiences are referred to in this study as educational marginalisation. Educational marginalisation as defined by this study refers to the inability for OVC to access education or an educational- related component or activity. It is the inability for OVC to access the resources they need to navigate pathways which will enable them to acquire an education.

This study views educational marginalisation as a process and an outcome of the schools failing to promote access and participation for OVC in education. It is about the barriers which prevent OVC from developing their educational capabilities and talents to their maximum potential. The findings revealed that educational marginalisation for OVC was grounded in the various structural elements within and beyond the school. While some of these elements were put in place to ensure the smooth running of the school, for the reason that OVC experienced destitution, these structures became risk factors which increased adversity for OVC and consequently their marginalisation and eventual exclusion from education and from life in

general. These educational structural elements include; school fees, school uniforms, lack of transport to school, selective allocation of resources and health and hygiene requirements in school. These structural elements are discussed below.

### **6.2.1 School fees and stationery**

The study revealed that school fees and stationery requirements contributed to the educational marginalisation of OVC in school. According to the findings, while the state paid for some of educational costs for OVC in high school and provided free education in state-owned primary schools, there were additional costs such as; payment for the security guard and school cook, money for firewood or gas to cook school meals, school trips or extra stationery and textbooks, that constituted additional fees which OVC had difficulty in paying. This view is captured in the following excerpt:

*My father used to pay my school fees on time just like for the children who have their fathers at school. But now...I am often turned home to collect the balance for my school fees. I have no one to pay that balance, so I continue to stay at home sometimes for a term and miss classes. I only go back when I think the head teacher has forgotten that I still owe school fees” (Learner Participant 15, message in a bottle).*

The afore-given excerpt reveals the concept of ‘*top-up*’ fees as a notion that foregrounds marginalisation for OVC. From the narration given, it is apparent that while part of the learner’s school fees has been paid for, there still is need for the participant to *top-up* those fees. From his articulations, it is evident that in the absence of a significant parent to pay for the required school fees, this participant experiences relegation. Having to stay at home sometimes for a term means that the participant is excluded from education. Going back to school after such lengthy periods may result in the participant being unable to cope with all the learning and school work he has missed out on, and as a result, he could eventually have to repeat the grade. From this excerpt, it is also patent that while the government of Eswatini contributes to the payment of school fees, paying for a fraction of the school costs does not fully support OVC since there usually is no one to pay for the remaining fees. While paying for some of the OVC fees maybe an act of inclusion, the inability for the state to pay for the total school fees requirements for all children remains a barrier to OVC inclusion in education.

The findings discussed above support literature which claims that the presence of a parent in their child’s life is more likely to enhance resilience in those children. According to Child

Welfare Information Gateway (2020), the presence of a parent is a protective factor that promotes the ability for vulnerable children to withstand adversity. Other authors (Smith, 2006; Moges & Weber, 2014) also believe that parents promote resilience and access to education by ensuring that they provide funding required in school. These views are in line with the participant's articulations which show that in the absence of a parent, the ability of the child to stay in school is compromised.

Other insights which highlight educational marginalisation are brought to the fore by Learner Participant 18 who states that:

*Sometimes as an OVC, I have no one to buy me things like a pen...a pen. One day I did not have a pen in class. I tried to borrow from my friends because we were writing a test. The teacher told me that if I don't have what I need to write his test then I must go outside. I went outside and sat there, I cried as they wrote the test. I got a Zero, and my name now given to me by the teacher is Zero. He now calls me ...yes Zero whenever he wants me to say something. (Learner Participant 18, message in a bottle).*

The narration given by this participant shows the intricate relationship between destitution and negative attitudes. From the above-give narration, it is evident that when one does 'not have', some people in the society view them as an outcast, someone who can be treated sub-humanly by others. As a result of her state of destitution, the participant encounters a negative attitude from her educators. The inability to purchase the resources necessary for learning, results in the participant being excluded from the ongoing educational activities. This participant is sent to stand outside, a clear message that those who do not have, do not belong in society. The participant is also given a label that confers a status of inferiority and academically less capable than other children. It is clear that, in an attempt to establish inclusive education, the state has rather hastily put together policies which are meant to promote inclusive education but instead result in the marginalisation and exclusion of OVC. These findings convey that inclusive education is not necessarily about planting inclusive policies in schools. Inclusive education cannot be reduced to a list of policies and strategies which have been lodged in schools as an eradication of exclusion (Slee, 2011). Inclusive education should commence with the recognition of the unequal social relations that produce exclusion, (Slee, 2011). Recognizing that OVC are already on an unequal social footing when compared to their non-OVC peers could be the beginning of inclusion. The inability for local governments to abolish the payment

of school fees and support schools fully such that OVC do not bear these costs is also noted by Education for All Global Report (2010).

The findings highlighted above reveal how adversity widens the gap between policy, practice and attitudes, exposing OVC to marginalization and undermining their capacity to build resilience. From these findings it is patent that the misfortune of having little or no familial support leads to OVC exclusion from education. The attitudes shown by teachers to OVC reveal a gap between inclusive education policy and practice in schools. It would seem that hardship, especially that which is poverty-oriented foregrounds exclusion and suppresses resilience in OVC. Clearly, being in school for OVC becomes a privilege that rests in the hands of others and not a basic human right as articulated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Being encouraged to enroll in school through promises of free education in primary school and the OVC Policy Fund in secondary and high school (EDSEC, 2011) while elements like ‘top-up’ fees and stationery are not catered for, continues to place them at risk of dropping out of school, is not being inclusive. As Graham and Slee note, to “shift students around on the educational chessboard is not in or of itself inclusive”, (2005, p. 3). By bringing in OVC from their communities through policies that promise free education, into an environment that is riddled with rigid and oppressive structures which do not take into account their destitution; the boundaries for the containment, marginalization and exclusion of OVC are re-established (Slee, 2011).

### **6.2.2 School uniforms**

Other than the need to pay for school fees and other learning materials, schooling policies such as the wearing of school uniforms by all children, creates room for OVC exclusion from education. This finding is highlighted in the following excerpt:

*My uniform looks very bad. It has patches all over and is really getting short. You can almost count the thread in it. The teachers often punish me for wearing uniform that is three inches above the knee, but what can I do? I can't change it. When I walk past the boys, they whistle and laugh, I just look down and keep walking, (Learner Participant 41, message in a bottle).*

Another participant also stated that:

*The biggest challenge I have as an OVC is the lack of uniforms. In my family there are many children who are still at school and we all need uniform. I wear torn uniform*

*which was given to me by my friend's mother which is now torn. At school, the others laugh at me because I wear torn uniform. I wish I could have parents to buy me school uniforms* (Learner Participant 7, message in a bottle).

The findings given above reveals the chain-like nature of adversity. From the above excerpt, it is evident that one form of adversity creates a backdrop for multiple other forms to be established. The inability to purchase a well-fitting school uniform results in the participants experiencing additional forms of adversity within the school environment. It transpires that the state in which Learner Participant 41's school uniform is, results in her encountering sexual harassment from her peers. The act of whistling connotes sexual advances which make Learner Participant 41 feel uncomfortable. In addition, the participant seems to experience marginalisation from her teachers as a result of the state in which her school uniform is in. From the participant's articulation that she is punished for wearing a uniform that is three inches above the knee, it is evident that there are school rules that relate to the length of the school uniforms. Such rules bring a sense of frustration and resignation as it is evident that the participant cannot get another uniform which will enable her to be within the school uniform code. It is evident that "being poor and female carries a disadvantage in many countries" (Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2010, p. 141).

While Muhati-Nyakundi (2017) argues that school uniforms are an inclusionary strategy which ensures that children from minority groups like OVC blend in with other learners, this study contradicts this finding. From the afore-given excerpts, it is clear that the school uniform policy becomes grounds for OVC marginalisation and social exclusion. Their inability to purchase the necessary school uniform subjects them to bullying and social exclusion from other children. OVC who do not have the required uniform seem to be treated as outsiders whose appearance never ceases to incite other children to make fun of them.

### **6.2.3 Lack of transportation to school**

The findings of the study also revealed that schools and the government of Eswatini did not provide transportation to enable all learners to get to school. The lack of school-based transport meant that all children had to make their own arrangements of securing transportation to school and this had negative repercussions for OVC as captured in the following excerpt:

*Unlike the other children who come to school in the kombis<sup>2</sup> (a utility van that is used by locals as a means of transportation) or the bus, we (OVC) don't have money to pay for that. We have to walk to school. Sometimes myself and my sisters, we have to walk eight kilometres to school and back. We get to school tired, and hungry, then I just sleep in class and Miss sends me out, saying I can continue with my hotel sleep outside her classroom, (Learner Participant 23, message in a bottle).*

The findings above reveal the intertwined nature of destitution and exclusion. It is evident that the lack of resources to counterbalance the risks to which OVC are vulnerable, leads to their marginalisation and exclusion from education. Being asleep while teaching and learning is ongoing, means that Learner Participant 23 is unable to participate in learning. Furthermore, his sleeping in class as a result of the long distances walked to school, also result in marginalisation by the teacher. Having to sit outside while learning is ongoing results in the exclusion of Learner Participant 23 from education. Additionally, the concept of exclusion for OVC is highlighted by the teacher's attitude towards the participant. The teacher seems not to be accommodative of the effects that walking long distances to school has on the participant. To her, the participant's behavior is misconstrued as laziness, insolence and not being serious about learning.

Other findings revealed how the lack of transportation to school affected the education of children with disabilities. This finding is highlighted in the following excerpt:

*The problems that I have as an OVC is that there is no one to take me to school. I live my grandmother and when my friends don't come, she pushes me to the station. But when my friends come sometimes, they to push me, but when we get to the station, sometimes the kombis won't stop for me. They tell me that they are late and I must wait for the big bus to come. Sometimes they tell me that I must pay for two people because my seat is too big. Then I wait for the big bus. Sometimes my friends leave me. The big bus comes late and I get to school late and the teachers get angry. I have asked if Father K can allow me to live at the hostel, maybe that will be better. But the money for [sic]hostel is also a problem. That is my problem (Learner Participant 2, questionnaires).*

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<sup>2</sup> The Kombi is a utility van that is used by locals in Eswatini as means of public transport to ferry locals to their places of destination.

The afore-given excerpt reveals how physical disabilities compound adversity for some OVC. While other OVC revealed that they did not have money to board the local transport, this participant reveals multiple challenges that he encounters as a result of his physical disability. In addition to the lack of resources which could enable him to live at school, this learner also experiences negative attitudes from others namely, the transport operators who seem to view him as a burden and inconvenience to their business. In addition to the adverse experiences that OVC with disabilities encounter, these findings also bring to the fore the dilemma of inclusive education (Miles & Singal, 2010). While the call to have all learners attend school in the communities in which they live (UNESCO, 1994) has been heeded, it is evident that the resources needed to support children with physical disabilities are not in place. It would seem that Miles and Singal (2010)'s view that children with disabilities experience the worst forms of exclusion are substantiated by these findings. Of concern is the attitude that teachers have towards children with disabilities. The lack of empathy towards them show how inclusive education for children with disabilities remains an illusion. Clearly, the achievement of inclusive education in Eswatini remains a challenge.

The findings given above reveal the relationship between transportation and inclusion into education. These findings support the claims made by Bierbaum et al. (2021) who argue that mobility justice and education equity are correlated concepts. These authors note that marginalised groups like OVC are less likely to attend school of their choice since they rarely afford transportation costs to school. While the Salamanca Statement (1994) argues that children should be accommodated in schools in their neighbourhood, Bierbaum et al. (2021), argue that moving away from traditional neighbourhood schools may increase access to better quality education. The argument made by these authors show that transportation plays a role in the issue of school of choice for OVC. From the arguments made, it is evident that OVC unlike their peers who afford to board transportation to school, are excluded from attending schools of their choice. Their inability to attend certain schools which could offer higher quality education means that OVC are excluded from accessing an education that is most likely to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable their social upward mobility. It also creates room for their 'othering' as they are compelled by circumstances to attend only schools that are within walking distance. Transportation therefore becomes a tool that divides society and widens the gap between those whom society view as the 'nucleus' and those that are seen as the 'surplus' (Slee, 2011). Sheller (2018) cautions that "beyond access to transport, we need to understand the ways in which uneven mobilities produce differently enabled (or

disabled) subjects and differently enabling (or disabling) spaces” (Sheller in Barajas 2021, p. 9). As reflected by the findings, issues related to mobility injustice, results in teachers labelling OVC as lazy children who do not want to participate in learning. The unevenness of mobility has turned schools into spaces that are ‘disabling’ as OVC are sent to sit outside in punishment for their ‘laziness’ during learning.

Mugoro (2014) argues that, transportation accessibility generates good attendance and educational attainment for children. Conversely, transportation challenges have a negative impact on school attendance and education attainment for children. As revealed by the findings, OVC who are unable to access transport to school get to school late, tired and hungry which and as a result are unable to participate fully in learning. These findings support the assertions made by Mugoro, (2014), that transport challenges often result in educational exclusion for some children in a number of ways. As a result of their inability to access mobility, children from marginalised groups usually miss out on the first period, encounter absenteeism and skip afternoon classes as they try to get home before dark (Mugoro, 2014). From these discussions, this study makes the claim that transport inaccessibility is a risk factor that not only increases the chances of OVC encountering marginalisation from others, but also weakens their resolve to stay in school.

#### **6.2.4 Lack of access to food**

The inability to access food was also a social factor which fore-grounded OVC marginalisation and exclusion. The findings revealed that due to the state of destitution in which they often found themselves, OVC often were unable to have access to food. According to the findings, the inability to access food was a major obstacle to OVC inclusion in education and into life in general. The lack of access to food is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*OVC also go to school hungry. They don't have much to eat at home because they don't stay with their parents. They come to school hungry, then they fall asleep in class and the teachers shout at them, and punish them yet they do not know that these children have a problem at home, (Learner Participant 17, message in a bottle).*

The above excerpt illustrates how food shortages affect their inclusion into education. From the participant's articulations, it comes across that OVC who do not have anything to eat at home experience challenges in accessing education. The inability for these OVC to access food at home translates into them falling asleep during lessons, which means they miss out on some

of the learning that is on-going. Furthermore, by sleeping in class, they attract further marginalisation from their teachers. They get to be verbally and physically admonished which may lead to some of them abandoning school all together. Also, from the participant's articulations, it would seem that some of the teachers do not bother to enquire about the state of social affairs in the OVC's lives. The articulation that *yet they do not know that these children have a problem at home* suggests that the teachers focus only on the children's educational life and are not knowledgeable on the children's social lives. This, as seen in the above articulations, leads to teachers failing to make inferences on why OVC could be behaving the way they do at school.

While the above discussion suggests that some teachers are not aware of the hunger that OVC experience at home, the following articulations contradict these findings. The severity of the hunger experiences seems to be known to some teachers and this is highlighted by Guidance and Counselling Teacher A, who stipulates that:

*One of the biggest problems that OVC face is hunger. Sometimes during school assembly or school activities some of these learners will faint. They have to be taken to the sick room. When the trucks don't come and there are no deliveries, you just talk to yourself,* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher A)

The above excerpt illustrates the gravity of hunger experienced by some OVC. By fainting during the school assembly, it is clear that having not had something to eat at home affects their health. When the learners faint because of hunger, it shows that what is said by the participants with regards to OVC inability to access food is serious and not just related to minor instances of hunger that have no major consequences. Of concern, is the attitude that teachers show towards OVC who fall asleep in class as a result of hunger. While the plight of lack of food for OVC is known to some teachers, as indicated by Guidance and Counselling Teacher A, other teachers seem to choose not to understand how the lack of food impacts OVC ability to concentrate and participate in learning. This suggests that some of the core principles of inclusive education are not upheld in schools. While the Salamanca Statement stipulates that inclusive education is about taking into consideration the diverse needs of all children and creating a welcoming environment which will accommodate them (UNESCO, 1994), it would seem that this principle is not upheld. Although some teachers may be aware that OVC have difficulty in accessing food and how this may translate to them being unable to participate fully in learning, they choose to disconnect themselves from the relationship that they ought to have

with their learners. They choose to uphold the rigid principles and regulations of the school and in so doing, the learning environment continues to be hostile as OVC who are overcome by hunger related fatigue are chased out of class and excluded from learning.

The findings discussed above reveal the intricate relationship between food security and inclusion. These findings show how hunger and food insecurity are correlated to educational equity for children from marginalised groups. This finding supports the views of Abafita and Kim (2014) who argue that food security has a positive impact on children's schooling. According to these authors, the ability to access food enables children from marginalised groups to actively engage in learning activities and achieve positive educational outcomes. Conversely, food insecurity has a negative effect on the ability for children to engage effectively in learning (De Muro & Burchi, 2007). According to these authors, food insecurity is correlated to low levels of literacy. As highlighted by the findings, food insecurity limits the capacity for concentration and the ability for children to perform in class and in other learning-related activities, an observation that supports the assertions made by De Muro and Burchi, (2007). From these discussions, this study argues that hunger is a social experience that impacts negatively on the inclusion of OVC in education. Hunger as noted by WFP (2004) and Muhati-Nyakundi (2017), is a risk factor that challenges the establishment of resilience and inclusion of OVC in education and in life in general.

Additionally, the interaction between food security and inclusive education come across conspicuously in literature that discusses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on OVC. Feyisayo et al. (2021) argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on food security to vulnerable groups. This view is supported by Shepherd and Mohohlwane (2021) who highlight that the education of children from marginalised groups such as OVC was adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to these authors, because children were not accessing meals which they usually did in school pre-COVID, parents had to spend more on food. This meant that some parents had to utilise money which was usually reserved for other school necessities to purchase food for their children. This according to the authors, resulted in some parents and guardians being unable to send their children back to school when schools reopened after the COVID-19 lockdown. Other authors (Kwabutana & Moladi, 2021), argue that because of the COVID-19 pandemic, children from marginalised groups were unable to access school-feeding which was sometimes the only meal they had for the day. According to these authors, the inability to access food has impacted negatively on their health, wellbeing and ability to participate actively in learning when schools re-opened. Evidently, as portrayed

by the findings, social experiences relating to food security have a significant bearing on the inclusion or exclusion of OVC from education.

### **6.2.5 Selective allocation of resources**

The study also revealed that some communal resources were allocated selectively such that other OVC could not access them as resources to enable their inclusion. According to the findings, some OVC were denied admission to the school of their choice while others were excluded from accessing the financial support offered by the state towards their school fees. An OVC who was denied access to the school of her choice shared the following:

*I was not admitted in one school around Mbabane because I am an OVC. I was told that the school takes a certain number of OVC and now they have enough, I must try another school. I had to start schooling in the outskirts, in a school that is far from my home because this school said they will not take me (Learner Participant 17, message in a bottle).*

The findings above highlight the relationship between social class and exclusion. From the participant's articulations, it is evident that her exclusion from admission into the school is as a result of her being part of a social class that is perceived to be a subordinate group in society. By virtue of being an OVC, this participant is denied admission into the school of her choice. As she is denied entry into the school nearest to her residence, it means this participant will now have to travel long distances to a school outside her community and possibly encounter some of the challenges already discussed previously which may result in her inability to achieve her educational goals. It is also evident that this is a society that is driven by competitive individualism whereby parents are goaded by the desire to have their children enrol in schools that are perceived to be better performing and this dissuades schools from enrolling those who are believed to compromise excellent performance. Clearly, rather than being institutions that bring democratic transformation, such schools uphold societal norms and values which promote social injustice and the exclusion of the minorities including OVC.

The afore-given finding shows the link between adversity and classism in society. For the reason that OVC are destitute, they are seen and treated as second class citizens whose welfare and education is of less importance than that of other children. In this instance, schools serve as a tool that perpetuates marginalisation and hinders social mobility for OVC. These findings seem to support Bowles & Gintis, (1976), who argued that schools serve as reproduction sites

for the labour market. From these authors' arguments it is evident that schools are oriented towards reproducing a labour force that will sustain the capitalist world. Children who may have financial challenges like OVC are perceived as those who may not be able to achieve the academic excellence required to serve the capitalist market efficiently, hence they are denied admission in those schools that strive for 'excellence'. In this instance, clearly the adverse circumstances of destitution results in OVC encountering further incidences of marginalisation and exclusion from education.

### **6.2.6 Health and Hygiene**

The findings to this study revealed that children in school were expected to conform to certain standards with regards to health and hygiene, and failure to do so resulted in those children being treated with disdain by others. The findings indicated that because of their state of destitution, OVC were often unable to adhere to these standards and this resulted in further adversity for them. This finding is highlighted in the following excerpt:

*Sometimes the teachers will speak loudly in front of the other children and tell me that my breath smells like cow dung and that I must wash my armpits otherwise I will make her vomit", (Learner Participant 12, message in a bottle).*

While Learner Participant 12 speaks about how his undesirable state of hygiene propagates adversity for him, Learner Participant 35 indicated how her health resulted in her being an object of marginalisation. According to this participant:

*Whenever I come back from collecting my medication, Miss always asks me where I am from. I tell her and she says I must speak loudly because she can't hear me. When I tell her then she says...which tablets? Your ARVs (Anti-retroviral medication)? That makes me want to cry because the other children now know that I take ARVs. Sometimes when she is teaching on HIV stories, then she looks at me, then all the students look at me and then look at the book. It's very embarrassing (Learner Participant 35, message in a bottle).*

Teachers, as depicted by learners in the excerpts above, appear to be uncaring and antisocial adults who heighten the social and educational exclusion of OVC. It is evident that OVC in this instance become isolated agents who experience humiliation and pain at the hands of their teachers. As adults who lack care and a prosocial demeanor, these teachers portray relationships as risk factors which enable OVC exclusion from education. By divulging OVC health status

to other children, the trust that should be characteristic of the relationships that children have with their teachers is broken. Having their trust betrayed by teachers could discourage OVC from asking for support from their teachers. It could lead to their detachment from social networks which as marginalised children, OVC could utilize as trajectories that enable their resilience and inclusion in education.

The findings articulated above social experiences of shame and humiliation related to the exclusion of OVC from education. The findings of the study indicate that there is a close relationship between shame, humiliation and exclusion. These findings support the views of Oravecz, Hárđi, and Lajtai, (2004), who argue that shame and humiliation are closely connected to social exclusion. According to these authors, shame and humiliation affect the individual negatively through the destruction of his/her social competencies. These claims are clearly demonstrated by the manner in which the participant reacts as shown in the above. From the articulation given, it is evident that the humiliation and shame experienced by the participant as a result of the teacher's insensitivity and negativity risk factors that affect the participant's resilience and inclusion negatively. Her feelings of embarrassment show how this social experience of humiliation weakens her autonomy as an individual. It is evident that after her encounter with the teacher, her focus is not on what she has missed while she was away at the clinic but it is on how her peers look at her during the lesson. Clearly, her ability to concentrate on learning has been adversely impacted. Majoni, (2016) concludes that humiliation and shame by the people who are supposed to look out for them results in deep hurt and embarrassment that could offset tendencies of absenteeism from school for OVC.

### **6.3 Summary**

The findings discussed in this subsection show that while education has been perceived to have the capacity to empower young people and broaden their minds such that they are able to take action that could transform their lives, schools as structures within the educational setup can also reinforce adversity and educational marginalisation. From the findings as discussed in this subsection, educational marginalisation both as a process and an outcome, becomes a channel through which OVC as a group or as individuals are denied access to the resources they need to acquire their educational capabilities through education (Girls' Education Challenge Thematic Review, 2018). It becomes a form of acute disadvantage that is rooted in destitution which creates room for more encounters of adversity for OVC and their eventual exclusion from education. As other children enrol into the schools of their choice without a problem,

receive all their lessons within a framework of family resources (Slee, 2011), it is not so with some OVC. For some, their fate when it comes to enrolment into the school of their choice, rests with the leadership of the school. Their engagement in learning is sometimes decided by the teacher who when she or he is not making fun of OVC, sends them outside for lack of materials needed for learning. Their play and engagement in social activities lies in the hands of other children who pull and push them out of the social world as and when they deem necessary. Clearly, inclusive education for some OVC is sometimes “merely the scraps from the table for children who, when all is said and done, are sometimes tolerated but never welcome” (Slee, 2011, p. 43).

The following sub-section discusses the subtheme of social marginalisation. In this subsection, I will highlight OVC experiences with regards to the marginalisation in social contexts such as in the community or family set up where OVC reside. The forthcoming section will also highlight how the experiences OVC encounter in social domains relate to the educational marginalisation they experience as discussed in this section.

#### **6.4 Social marginalisation**

In addition to the educational marginalisation which OVC encounter in school, the study uncovered that some OVC also contended with social marginalisation in the communities in which they lived. The findings of the study unveiled that OVC unlike other groups, were often inhibited from accessing social services in their communities. This denial to access the social services which the majority of other people in the community are able to access, is defined by this study as social marginalisation. Unlike educational marginalisation which relates only to OVC being denied access to education, social marginalisation speaks to the inability for OVC to access numerous components such as services, rights, relationships or activities which other members of the community are able to acquire (United Nations, 2016).

While Muhati-Nyakundi (2017) project that social structures such as the family and the community at large are protective factors which cushion the risk of exclusion for OVC, this study revealed that, in unfortunate circumstances, these social structures became risk factors which contributed significantly to the social marginalisation of OVC. This subsection discusses the social elements which propagated OVC vulnerability to social marginalisation. These elements are discussed below.

#### 6.4.1 Family dysfunctionality

The study revealed that OVC were often denied that resources that enabled their inclusion. When OVC lost their parents, they were often rejected by other members of their families, leaving them to live on their own and to fend for themselves. This claim is evident in the following excerpts:

*When my mother died, we were left alone because my father had died six years earlier. Our relatives did not want to take us with them. They were saying that we will be an extra burden to them. We eventually had to be taken care of by my elder brother in my mother's house* (Learner Participant 11, message in a bottle).

The above excerpt reveals the concept of child-headed households which are as a result of family dysfunctionality. Learner Participant 11's articulation indicates that when children lose both their parents, the chances of them living alone as children and having one of them head the family are increased. From this finding, it is evident that child-headed families are a prominent feature in the lives of OVC. The withdrawal of relational networks by relatives means that relationships as a tool that could assist OVC performance as actors in and on their environment is minimized. The responsibility to mediate the adverse circumstances in which OVC often find themselves is unfairly left to them. Clearly, as they work on their goals of inclusion and resilience, they do so on their own, without being able to draw from the resources that their relatives could offer as OVC try to make sense of their worlds.

While Learner Participant 11's revelations show how they are taken care of by an older sibling, Learner Participant 20 in the following excerpt shows the experiences of OVC who are heads of their families:

*I was faced with many challenges after my parents died. Being the eldest of the other siblings, I had to become a mother at the age of sixteen. No one wanted to take us in. Our relatives just did not care about us. I have to fend for everyone. When I try asking for assistance from our relatives who refuse to take us in, they just slam the door, I guess they also have their fair share of problems* (Learner Participant 20, message in a bottle).

As the head of the household, Learner Participant 20's revelation provides a direct insight to the plight of some OVC who head families. From her articulations that she became a mother at the age of sixteen, it is patent that this participant began to take on the responsibilities often

assumed by adults at that age. The articulation that *I had to become a mother*, indicates how rejection by her family members forced her to take on a role that brought with it added responsibilities such as ensuring that all members of her family have. From her report that she tried asking for assistance from her relatives, it shows that this participant did not have the resources she needed to support her family.

The findings highlighted above contest the perception that in sub Saharan Africa, the responsibility of bringing up a child is shared by the family, in its nuclear or extended form (Letseka, 2013). From the findings of the study, it is evident that this principle is declining. As children begin to bring up other children because family members abdicate their social responsibilities of bringing up all children in the family, it becomes clear that the family which Letseka (2013) perceives to be the primary institution for moral development is on the verge of collapse. As the value of responsibility for others, which is at the core of Ubuntu, disintegrates, the inability for OVC to access family support opens up room for additional adverse encounters for OVC.

Family dysfunctionality was also revealed by findings that showed that OVC were denied access to the inheritance which they were entitled to in the event of the death of their parents. The study uncovered that when OVC lost their parents, members of the extended family often helped themselves to the resources that the surviving children could utilize to support their needs. One Learner Participant revealed that:

*When my father died, my aunts took all that my mother had in the kitchen while she was in mourning. My uncles took my father's cows and said he owed them some money. They took his tractors and cars because they said it belonged to the whole family. We were left with nothing! Now that my mother is also dead, they have taken over our house. We live with some of them in the house (Learner Participant 30, message in a bottle).*

Other forms of abuse encountered by OVC include The social marginalisation of OVC also came across through the different forms of exploitation which they experienced at the hands of others in their communities. According to the findings of the study, OVC often encountered sexual, physical and verbal abuse as they engaged with the world around them. These findings are highlighted in the following excerpt:

*After my mother died, my uncle started coming into our bedroom. He would tell me to take off my clothes and he would start touching me. He would tell me that I should not tell anyone or he will beat me up. I am now sick, like he is. Then they had to tell my grandmother what was wrong with me. I am now taking tablets every day. (Learner Participant 12, message in a bottle).*

This shocking revelation made by Participant 12 offers disturbing evidence of how relational networks can be risk factors which subject OVC to further adversity in their lives. The sexual perpetrator in this instance is not a stranger to the participant. As an uncle, he is one of the people who should be providing support and protection to the participant. In this instance he is the very person who places the participant at risk of experiencing further adversity in her life. By performing malicious acts of a sexual nature which have resulted in the participant contracting HIV, the uncle has performed acts which not only increase the chances of marginalisation and exclusion, but also those of illnesses resulting from the HIV infection.

Other forms of sexual abuse that were brought to the fore, emanated from the cultural practices within the communities in which OVC lived. The findings of this study revealed that sometimes when OVC girls went to live with their sisters, they were forced into sexual relationships by their brother-in-law (sister's husband) on the pretext that it is a cultural practice. This finding is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*After my mother died, I had to live with my sister so that she takes care of me because I was alone. Whenever my sister was not around, Sbali<sup>3</sup> would come to me and tell me that he wants kulamuta (have sexual relationship with me). When I refuse he will tell me that this is our customary law and he pays for my school fees. Because my sister brought me here, I am also his wife (Learner Participant 31, message in a bottle).*

The extract given above shows how some OVC have to fight traditions and cultural practices that threaten their autonomy as young people. The articulations made by Learner Participant 31 indicate that some OVC are expected to conform to cultural practices that they do not subscribe to so that they can attain an education and wellbeing in general. The concept of the customary law and how it translates to the abuse of those from marginalised groups is brought to the fore. It is clear that this participant's brother in law has a sense of entitlement to have

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<sup>3</sup> Sbali is a term used to refer to 'brother-in law' in siSwati.

unconsented sex with the participant because it is ascribed in the customary law of Eswatini. The findings discussed through the subtheme of physical and verbal abuse support the view that, “to include is not necessarily to be inclusive” (Graham & Slee, 2005, p. 3). This means that while the act of bringing in OVC under their care might be seen as inclusion on the part of family members, this act is merely incorporating OVC and does not ensure that they will be supported. While they might have a roof over their heads, there could be an absence of an all-encompassing approach to the way in which they are supported.

The findings of this study as highlighted above challenge the theory of Ubuntu as a resilience enhancing philosophy. A plethora of literature (Theron, 2010; Theron & Pasha, 2015; Rensburg et al., 2019) argue that in communities of the sub-Saharan, Ubuntu is a resilience-enhancing philosophy that enables OVC to navigate the adverse circumstances which they encounter in their daily lives. While these authors argue that the values of Ubuntu encourage resilience in vulnerable children, the findings to this study make the revelation that; when children become orphaned or vulnerable, they are seen and treated as the ‘other’ by members of the extended family or community at large. As highlighted by van Breda (2019), every society creates its ‘others’. OVC therefore acquire a second class citizen status of the ‘other’ which portrays them as less humane and not worthy to be treated in an Ubuntu-premised manner. As the principles of Ubuntu are withheld from them, their resilience is smothered and so is their inclusion and wellbeing in general. While authors like Msengana (2006) believe that in communities of Ubuntu, the community does not tolerate the exploitation of others and Letseka asserts that “It would be illogical for anyone with *botho* or *ubuntu* to have the inclination to rape because rape is an affront to and is inconsistent with *ubuntu* moral norms and values” (Letseka, 2013, p. 358); the findings in this section contradict the views put across by these authors. From what members of the family do to OVC, this study puts it across that Ubuntu as a resilience promoting concept is in itself a contradictory and contested notion.

In addition to sexual abuse the study also unveiled that OVC encountered verbal abuse and humiliation from those in the environment in which they lived. The findings of the study revealed that in the event some relatives took responsibility for them, those OVC often encountered incidences of verbal abuse. This view is captured in the following excerpt:

*My step-mother is a very abusive person. She sometimes beats me for not doing her laundry and she chases me out of the house even if I did nothing wrong. She likes taking out all her frustrations on me. (Learner Participant 27, message in a bottle).*

The articulation given above brings to the fore the different forms of abuse that OVC endure at the hands of the very people who should be supporting them. From the articulations, it is patent that as relatives take OVC in, they expect them to 'earn their keep'. While the expectation is that in communities of Ubuntu, every child in the family is your child (Letseka, 2013), it is evident that the findings of this study contradict this is argument. In the OVC they take in, relatives seem to see children whom they can use as free labour.

In addition to the being verbally abused by their relatives, further articulations by the participant indicated that at the helm of the verbal abuse they experienced was their own parent. According to Learner Participant 27:

*When I have done something wrong and my step mother reports me to my father, my father sometimes says very painful things to me. Sometimes he says that you are nothing but trouble to me. You make things very difficult for me. I should have made your mother abort you a long time ago. Now you are my problem (Learner Participant 27, message in a bottle).*

As highlighted by the study and discussed in previous chapters that some of the participants identified as OVC despite having parent(s), the above narration is a testament to that highlight. From the narration given above, it transpires that parents can be the source of OVC's adversity. The perception I had before engaging in this study was that, OVC who have at least one parent in their lives were in a position to receive more support and as a result encountered less adversity in their lives. Contrary to this view, the study revealed that sometimes OVC with a parent encountered even more hurtful and malicious experiences than OVC who lived on their own. When a child learns from his/her parent that they are a problem and that they should have been aborted, surely this is amongst the most agonizing experiences a child can encounter. The statement that *my father sometimes says very painful things to me*, indicates how deep the words spoken by her father cut into Learner Participant 27's feelings.

While in earlier sections, the findings revealed that the absence of a parent in the lives of their child minimises resilience, these findings are contradictory to those findings. According to these findings, the presence of a parent who does not share the same cultural capital that is valued by the child is likely to inhibit resilience in the child. These findings are supported by Sullivan (2007) who notes that for resilience to transpire, parents need to have the kinds of cultural capital that is valued by the child. If the parent's cultural capital does not align to that of their child, then the presence of the parent becomes a risk factor for that child. Based on

these findings, this study infers that the presence of a parent in the lives of a child does not automatically enhance resilience to vulnerability. In unfortunate circumstances, rather than being a resilience-enhancing component, parents do become risk factors that enhance vulnerability in their children.

#### **6.4.2 Living with grandparents**

The findings of this study also revealed that the social marginalisation of OVC is also expedited when OVC live with elderly grandparents as their custodians. It is noted in this study that the responsibility of taking care of OVC often falls on the grandparents rather than on any other member of the extended family. While the presence of a grandparent could support OVC, the risks of being under the guidance of elderly people cannot be overlooked. These risks are articulated in following excerpt:

*It is difficult to have to come across such obstacles at such a tender age. All my relatives refused to take me and my siblings into their homes. Only my grandfather took us in. I have to man up and do all the household chores because my grandfather is too old. I have to leave the house spot on before I go to train with my friends. It becomes heart-breaking when I have to miss a soccer match due to my grandfather who is living with epilepsy and because he sometimes collapses, I have to be there to look after him when I am not at school (Learner Participant 9, the message in a bottle).*

Other findings relating to the challenges of OVC being taken in by grandparents was articulated by Learner Participant 2 who stated that:

*I really don't have time to be sitting and talking with other girls of my age. I have to do the cleaning and cooking and then I must take care of my sick grandmother. Sometimes I have to push her in her wheelchair, get her on the bus and take her to the hospital. So, I can't be out with my friends (Learner Participant 2, interviews).*

The afore-given findings highlight the co-joined nature of inclusion and exclusion. Evidently, inclusion is a bidirectional phenomenon where inclusion and exclusion operate simultaneously. Although living with their grandparents is an indication of inclusion by family members, the added responsibility that comes with this inclusive move, places OVC at risk of exclusion from social activities enjoyed by children of their age. From the articulations of both Learner Participant 9 and Learner Participant 2, it is evident that residing with their grandparents inhibits them from fully participating in friendships, team sports, and social events that other

children are able to enjoy in the community. Besides missing out on activities that enhance their development as children, it is clear that these OVC have to take on an additional role of taking care of their grandparents. It could be the case that most OVC are taken in by their grandparents because the grandparents also stand to benefit from the support OVC will afford them. Whatever the reason might be, it is evident that being under the care of elderly grandparents, places OVC at risk of encountering additional adversity.

While some authors argue that warm family relationships coupled with positive home environments enable OVC resilience (Shean, 2015), the findings reveal that being under the care and guardianship of older carers such as grandparents might inhibit resilience in OVC. The findings show that OVC who reside with elderly guardians miss out on peer-relationships and activities which are said to promote resilience in young people (Skovdal & Ogutu, 2012). This study therefore argues that while guardians may be resilient enhancing resources which promote the inclusion of OVC in education, the older the guardian gets, due to ill-health and the inability to provide the resources needed by the children under their guardianship, they become less effective in promoting resilience in OVC.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

This chapter presented, discussed and analysed the research findings relating to the theme of adversity. The discussions given in this chapter highlight how the significant lack of the resources they needed resulted in educational and social marginalisation for OVC. It is also evident that OVC exclusion is perpetuated by other people in the communities in which OVC live. It is as a result of the structures, policies and processes that society sets up, especially in formalised institutions such as schools (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2010). These powerful and rigid structures which practitioners are unwilling to bend so as to enable the inclusion of OVC in education, results in their exclusion from education and in life in general. While there are numerous international human rights structures (the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1990 Jomtein Declaration, the 1992 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child and the Salamanca Statement of 1994) which decree that the right to education be upheld by every state, OVC remain amongst the children whose rights to education are not upheld (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2010). The structures which have been discussed in this chapter form formidable barriers which accelerate adversity and weaken OVC resilience and inclusion into education and to life in general. They remain

rigid and non-evolving, leaving some OVC to work around them in an effort to access the resources they need for inclusion.

The conclusion drawn is that; vulnerable and marginalised groups are capable of identifying the ways in which they are marginalised and excluded. The rigid and powerful structures which are set up in schools and in communities at large, silence the voices of OVC and in so doing promote their exclusion from education. This calls for institutions or institutional arrangements to be more flexible and willing to respond to the insights that vulnerable groups have to offer. Understanding that OVC have more to offer on issues that relate to their inclusion or exclusion from education, creates grounds for the success of inclusive education.

The next chapter is a presentation, analysis and discussion of data relating to the theme of Responsible Agency. This theme unlike the theme of adversity highlights OVC agency. It looks at how amidst the challenges and misfortunes of adversity, OVC as social actors access inclusion and wellbeing in general.

## CHAPTER 7

### RESPONSIBLE AGENCY

#### 7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theme of adversity as experienced by OVC in schools and in the communities in which they live. This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the theme of **Responsible Agency**. While the previous chapter discussed the adversity that OVC endure in their lives, this chapter speaks of their ability as OVC to perform deliberate acts of responsibility that cushion the hardship they encounter. This chapter demonstrates the extraordinary efforts OVC have to make to overcome the oppressive, debilitating effects of excluding social structures. Since responsible agency is grounded in agency, this chapter begins by discussing Agency in general, then proceeds to discuss responsible agency in relation to the adversarial structural aspects of the previous chapter.

Agency is perceived by several scholars to be the capacity for an individual to make decisions about his/her life and act on those decisions to achieve the desired outcome (Giddens, 1984; Hill, 2010; Klugman et al., 2014). It is seen as the backdrop on which transformation is foregrounded (Kajamaa & Kumpulainen, 2019). It speaks to how the initiation and volitional actions of individuals interact with the resources offered by the environment to alter risks in the lives of individuals. Agency therefore can be said to be a reframing process whereby the decisions of individuals to collaborate with the resources around them, lead to a restructuring of the world in which they live (Kajamaa & Kumpulainen, 2019).

Agency, in this study is defined as the ability for OVC to engage with the environment in a manner that disrupts exclusion in their lives. It is perceived as the capacity for OVC to engage in deliberate action of selecting, framing, and executing their actions in a way that is not fully dictated by the challenges around them, but by their own desires, goals and aspirations of achieving what matters to them. It speaks to the ability of OVC to become agents of change in their lives. That is, when despite the external forces that threaten their inclusion into education, they remain thespians who through the resources made available to them, manipulate the environment to ensure their resilience, inclusion and wellbeing (Barandiaran et al., 2009).

The findings to this study indicated that at the heart of OVC inclusion and resilience, was responsible agency. Responsible agency is viewed as an individual's deliberate act to choose

and execute his or her actions in a manner that is not fully determined by other people, elements or situations other than the individual's own understanding and reasoning (Martin et al., 2003). While it is about individual choice, the emphasis is on how participation is not just about choice and consuming resources, it is also about contributing and shaping the resources around the environment (Edwards, 2007). It brings to the fore the powerful effect of participation in shaping services and resources that OVC need to build self-efficacy (Edwards, 2007).

Responsible agency in this study focuses on the individual. It proposes that the capacity to change the social world also lies within the actions that OVC themselves perform. It views OVC's individual sense of understanding, reasoning, commitment and volition as critical elements of bringing about change in the environment in which they live. It highlights the interplay between agency and structure by bringing to the fore how OVC shape the environment in which they live.

Responsible agency is also grounded in moral philosophy; an approach which assumes that an individual is a moral agent who has an obligation to which that individual is required by some customary norms, principles or tradition to uphold (Talbert, 2019). It is an approach that views the individual as an agent who is concerned with the wellbeing of everyone affected by what he or she does (Rachels & Rachels, 2019). This view presupposes that as individuals, OVC have the responsibility to act on the world in which they live in a manner that conforms to the expectations and standards of the society (Rachels & Rachels, 2019). Consequently, they can be held accountable and responsible by themselves and by others within their society (Coeckelbergh, 2009).

The findings to this study revealed that OVC were in themselves responsible agents who facilitated their resilience and inclusion into education. From the findings of the study, it transpired that OVC were able to develop effective strategies for directing their trajectories to inclusion into education and into life in general. According to the findings of this study, OVC had the ability to engage responsibly with their world through creating pathways that enabled them to bounce back from adversarial situations. Be that as it may, it is worth mentioning that the concept of agency is plagued by tensions between acknowledging the role of structural factors and individual choice (Edwards 2005). In the case of marginalised populations such as OVC, the structures tend to be oppressive and work against the capacities of marginalised individuals. This is particularly true in current social contexts, and also in the OVC's situations

as demonstrated by the findings, that tend to be characterised by deeply unequal power relations.

Responsible agency in OVC as projected by the findings of this study is enabled through ‘individual agency-oriented’ resilience and ‘hidden’ resilience. These two subthemes are discussed below.

## **7.2 Individual agency-oriented Resilience**

The findings to this study revealed that OVC were autonomous beings who were able to perform various individual-oriented acts which cushioned the adversity they often encountered in their lives. The study unveiled that OVC had the individual capability to perform determination, optimism, creativity and innovation, obligation, and humour as acts that enabled their resilience and inclusion into education and life in general. The findings of this study revealed that when OVC were confronted with circumstances that threatened their inclusion and wellbeing, they often deliberately acted in a manner that disrupted possible exclusion from education and from life in general. From the findings of the study, it transpires that, by acting determinedly, optimistically, creatively and innovatively, taking responsibility for others and acting humorously, OVC are able to bounce back, remain strong or even grow in the midst of the adversity they encounter in their everyday lives.

The manner in which OVC perform resilience as they encounter obstacles that threaten their livelihoods and inclusion is discussed below.

### **7.2.1 Determination**

The study revealed that when faced with challenges, some OVC tackle them by performing acts of determination which eventually disrupted the negative environment and adverse situations in which they often found themselves. This finding is articulated in the following excerpt:

*I know what I want. I want to be somebody one day, not just an OVC from the village. I want to leave this life [of hardship]. I take my schoolwork very seriously. I wake up early and do my homework if there is no candle. By the time there is some light, I am up, finish my home-work, do my household chores then go to school. I am never in trouble for not doing my schoolwork (Learner Participant 13, message in a bottle).*

The findings articulated above reveal the concept of autonomy as a significant component of agency. The above-given articulations, reveal how OVC assume the standpoint of being social actors who take it upon themselves to navigate the adverse terrain in which they often find themselves. From the findings, it is evident that OVC utilise individual agency as a compass that enables them to traverse the hardships they encounter in their daily lives. Learner Participant 13's articulations reveal how she perceives herself as a source of her own actions. By setting goals for herself and remaining purposeful and resolute in achieving her goals with regards to her education, she reveals the nature of humans as purposeful beings. From the articulation that: *I know what I want*, it is evident that this participant is an intentional being. She has clear intentions of changing the circumstances in which she is and make a better life for herself. Through self-motivation, she is able to remain in school despite the numerous responsibilities and challenges she has as an OVC. Based on these findings, this study argues that OVC are autonomous beings who can contribute to their inclusion in education and to life in general. As agents of responsible agency, they are able to take deliberate and planned actions to achieve the desired goal amidst adversity (Ginsburg & Jablow, 2006).

The findings as articulated in the above excerpt support the views of Perlman et al. (2018) who argue that there is a significant interplay between resilience and self-determination. According to these authors, self-determination can influence a variety of outcomes. Determination as shown in the above articulation changes what could have been a circumstance of marginalisation into one where the participant is eager to engage in learning because they have taken it upon themselves to ensure that their school work is completed. As argued by Perlman et al. (2018), resilience lessens the levels of stress and anxiety, enabling the individual more confidence to deal with situations of adversity and true to this assertion, the articulations reveal that because of her determination, this participant seems to be stress-free as she has performed acts of responsibility that will enable her to avoid marginalisation and exclusion at school.

The findings as articulated above also support the view that resilience and individual autonomy are interrelated concepts. Nussbaum (1999) argues that at the centre of resilience as the capability of an individual, is the idea that the human is a free being who shapes his or her own life, rather than being submissively driven around by other organisms of the environment; while (Frediani, 2010; Hoffman & Metz, 2017) postulate that central to resilience is individual agency; the ability for one to choose that which they believe is of value to them. As argued by these authors, the findings reveal that OVC have the ability to choose to act in a manner that may disrupt vulnerability in their daily lives.

The findings given above also reflect the contradictory and conflicting nature of resilience. While earlier findings revealed how some OVC seemed to buckle under the challenges they encountered, the findings given above reveal how other OVC exude resilience as they choose to perform actions that will enable them to achieve what matters the most to them. Be that as it may, this study does not view resilience as a dichotomous attribute that someone either has or doesn't (Perlman et al., 2018). This study subscribes to the view that resilience is a contextual concept (Shean, 2015). In some contexts, OVC may be able to remain strong while in other situations, the structures may be too rigid and unrelenting thus preventing OVC from exercising individual autonomy.

### **7.2.2 Optimism**

The findings also revealed individual-oriented agency in OVC through the acts of optimism which OVC performed when they encountered adverse experiences in their daily lives. That is, while OVC lived under challenging circumstances, they usually acted in a manner that showed being hopeful of achieving success in the future. In their minds, they saw themselves transcending adversity and attaining an efficacious life in the future and this pushed them to do what they believed they had to do to attain that future. This view is captured in the following extract.

*I know once I am done with my education all this will be history. I will only have a faint memory of all the challenges I am facing today. I am a hard worker. Even though I have so much work to do at home, I still give myself time with my books. If there has been no candle the previous night, I make sure I wake up as early as 4:00 am, heat the water and cook the breakfast in the open place, get to school early and write my homework. It's not an easy thing, but I understand that I have no one to help me so I have to work harder than other learners do (Learner Participant 6, message in a bottle).*

The findings articulated above reveal how some OVC' individual autonomy enabled them to perform acts of optimism which facilitated their ability to stay strong and continue with their education and with life in general. The above narration highlights that OVC are able to act independently optimism enables self-reflection in the participant. From her acts of careful consideration of the actions that she has to perform, it is evident that self-reflection is a tenet of responsible agency. The statement that *I am a hard worker. Even though I have so much work to do at home, I still give myself time with my books*, it is patent that this participant

reflects on who she is and how she can use that to achieve her goals. It is her action to self-reflect that leads to her being optimistic about her future. Rather than focusing on and becoming overwhelmed by the present and its challenges, she focuses on the future and constructs it in a positive way. Driven by a sense of conviction that things will change for the better, this participant performs acts that enable her to balance the workload and responsibilities she has. It is also evident that the participant reflects on the actuality that; unlike other children she does not have a strong network of familial support that could ease the load such that she experiences life like other children. The participant herself says she has to *work harder than other learners do*. From this statement, it is surmised that OVC acknowledge that they have to endure more hardship. It would seem that OVC who perform responsible agency endure excessive hardship which more privileged children are protected from by the familial support they receive from those around them. It comes across that in order for OVC to access the things they need in life; they have to perform acts that will enable them to rise above the extreme poverty that they often experience in their lives.

The findings articulated above show how the social experience which relate to optimism relate to the inclusion of OVC in education. The findings as articulated above show that individual characteristics of optimism foreground OVC resilience and resolve to stay in school and complete their education. These findings support the views of Molinero et al. (2018), who argue that having good expectations about the future enables individuals to adapt to traumatic and stressful conditions. The findings in this section are in line with this literature. As highlighted by the findings, driven by the conviction that things will change for the better in future, the participants are able to navigate the difficult circumstances which they encounter in their daily lives.

### **7.2.3 Obligation**

The study also revealed that some OVC acted in ways that showed commitment to others (especially to their siblings) and in so doing, redirected the negative encounters of adversity which placed them at risk of experiencing exclusion from education and from life in general. It transpired that in the absence of the parent(s) as primary care-givers, older OVC often assumed the responsibility of cushioning the adversity that younger OVC could experience as a result of the lack of parental support. This is evident in the following extract:

*Knowing that I have my sisters and brothers looking up to me makes me work harder. I know that if I fail, I fail them. I need to make it so that I can get all of us out of this situation, (Learner participant 11, message in a bottle).*

The above-given narration reflects how responsibility forms part of the individual characteristics that enable OVC to perform acts of dedication and duty which enable the inclusion and general wellbeing of others in their lives. From the narration given by the participant, it is evident that responsible agency is not a linear enterprise, but it is characterised by a transactional nature whereby their connectedness to others (in this instance their siblings), becomes a foundation on which OVC' ability to perform responsibility is based. From the statement that, *I need to make it so that I can get all of us out of this situation*, it is clear that the actions of this participant are rooted in the relationship he has with his siblings. Evidently, while responsible agency speaks of how the individual contributes to the change he /she wants to see, those acts of responsibility are not in isolation but situated in the relationships he/she has with others. It is apparent that OVC seem to concede that, in the absence of supportive structures in society, it is through taking deliberate acts of responsibility for each other that the adverse situations of exclusion which they experience in their daily lives can be disrupted.

Additionally, the moral aspect of responsible agency comes across succinctly as Learner Participant 11 sees himself as a moral agent who is responsible for the wellbeing of his siblings. He vows to work harder and not to fail in life not because it is what he wants for himself, but because he feels he owes it to his siblings to achieve what can eventually be a life they deserve as a family. Evidently, in the absence of familial support, the responsibility of ensuring that their livelihood continues often iniquitously falls on one of the children. While the participant may be capable of performing acts of responsibility and commitment to his siblings, the pressure that comes with working hard to ensure his success and the success of others cannot be overlooked. As a child, having to *work harder* for others, could have an adverse impact on his own progression in life.

Another participant revealed OVC' sense of obligation by highlighted that:

*Whenever I come back from school I have to make sure that my younger sisters have done their homework and that it is correct because if it is not, the teacher will then beat them tomorrow. I then can't do my homework because I now have to cook and do all the other things. But I would rather not do my own homework and get punished at school than that they beat them (Learner Participant 34, Message in a bottle).*

The above-given extract brings to the fore the strong sense of sibling connection that sometimes comes as a result of the absence of parent(s) in the lives of OVC. It shows how, in the absence of parental and other social structures to support them, OVC develop a strong sense of responsibility towards each other. They often take it upon themselves to assume a parental role that will enable other siblings to remain resilient despite the hardships they experience as a child-headed household. For the reason that society fails to put the appropriate structures to enable their inclusion and wellbeing, these children have to perform acts of selflessness and put the needs of others above their own. While this sense of selflessness is commendable, it is also worrying because of how it places some OVC at risk of exclusion from education. Not doing her homework in a bid to protect her siblings from being punished by their teachers, places this participant at risk of jeopardizing her own future as she takes liability for her siblings' inclusion. It would seem that the moral principle of being accountable for others outweighs the risk of encountering personal adversity and possible exclusion from education for Learner Participant 34 and this is without a doubt an unfair situation for any child to find themselves. Evidently, while OVC are capable of performing responsible agency, it is sometimes at a personal cost that they do so.

The findings on obligation as a components of resilience are supported by Evans' (2012) who observes that the love and bond that siblings share encourage OVC to stay strong in the midst of adversity. According to Evans (2012), when children lost their parent(s), they became committed to staying together and taking care of each other. As highlighted by the findings, older siblings usually take it upon themselves to make sure that the younger children are taken care of, even if it means that as older siblings they have to forgo their own education; an observation which is also noted by Lee, (2012).

In addition, the findings also support the view that resilience is an age-related concept. As mentioned in preceding chapters, age is one of the determinants of resilience in children (Werner & Smith, 1977). These authors note that younger OVC are less resilient than their older counterparts. As highlighted by the findings in this study, older OVC often took it upon themselves to be caregivers to the younger OVC. Older OVC performed more chores and also ensured that the younger OVC are taken care of. Learner Participant 34 articulates that it would rather be her taking punishment from her teachers than her siblings. From this articulation, it is evident that as the older child, she is a better position to take the hardships that may come as a result of not doing her homework than her younger siblings, hence; the age-related component of resilience.

#### 7.2.4 Innovation and creativity

The findings of this study also revealed that inclusion was further expedited by OVC's acts of innovation and creativity. The study unveiled that some OVC were able to perform acts of innovation and creativity through which they were able to disrupt the adverse experiences they encountered in their daily lives. This is evidenced in the following extract:

*On Saturdays and when schools are closed, I always go to the market to sell some vegetables to get money to buy food for our family. Sometimes, I ask if I can wash clothes from the teachers, and I start there before I go to the market. This also gives me money to buy food and also buy some nice things like my friends, (Learner Participant 48, message in a bottle).*

The afore-given excerpt shows how some OVC utilise individual characteristics of innovation and creativity to navigate the challenging circumstances in which they often find themselves. From the narrations given by the participant, it is evident that some OVC are capable of performing acts and practices that reframe the social contexts in which they live. The acts of innovation and creativity show that some OVC perceive themselves as a source for the transformation that they want to see in their lives. Their individual agency enables them to avert the marginalisation and exclusion which is often as a result of the adverse circumstances in which OVC find themselves. From the participants' articulations, it is evident that OVC recognize that by performing acts that will generate resources which will enable their livelihood, they can manipulate the environment such that they cushion the risks of marginalisation and exclusion.

OVC's ability to be innovative and creative is also evidenced by Learner Participant 23 who highlights that:

*My sisters and I now cannot miss any occasion in the community where there will be food. If there is a wedding or a funeral in our community, we are always there. We collect the left-overs from the tables and take them home to the younger siblings and to my grandmother (Learner Participant 23, message in a bottle).*

The afore-given excerpt reveals how responsible agency enables OVC to develop practices that enable them to act on their adverse situation of hunger such that they are able to access food as a resource that will enable their wellbeing. From the above discussion, it is patent that some OVC face and manage the hardships they encounter by maximizing the benefits of attending

events held in their community. By utilizing their skills of innovation and creativity, they come up with new pathways to access the resources they need for their wellbeing. Based on Participant 23's report above, it is clear that social gatherings have now become a resource which OVC access to restructure the food shortages which they experience in their daily lives. It is evident that this group of OVC does not wait for any invitation to attend these social events. Their agency enables them to push the boundaries that society has created and access what matters the most to them. By not waiting for an invitation, it shows that they are circumventing social structures which are forbidding and exclusionary towards them.

From the findings discussed above, it is evident that agency has positive implications for creativity, autonomy and well-being, as noted by Etalapelto et al. (2013). From the decisions they make and the actions they take as highlighted in the above-given extracts, it can be argued that OVC are not just consumers of services and resources made available to them, but they contribute to the creation and shaping of the environment so that they enable their resilience and wellbeing in general (Edwards, 2007). Their ability to create their own external economic and social pathways which they navigate to survive the hardships experienced, is also evidenced by Hill (2010) who asserts that agency is a capacity for an individual to define his/her goals, pursue them and act upon them. Knowing what they want, which in this case is to have a life that children of their age have and to remain in school like their peers, OVC perform acts of independence and self-direction which enable them to strive towards making a positive influence on their education and well-being in general.

Literature stipulates that there is an intricate relationship between resilience and creativity. According to Wang et al. (2021), creativity leads to tactfulness and resilience. These authors view creativity as a protective factor that enables individuals to circumvent adversity. The findings given above show that OVC who are creative and innovative are able to navigate the adverse circumstances of hunger that were highlighted in previous chapters as an adverse circumstance that OVC had to traverse.

Furthermore, the findings support the views made by Ungar (2013) who argues that while OVC are autonomous beings who have the individual capacity to perform acts that will enable them to achieve what they need for their livelihood, that autonomy is not independent of the environment. From the findings, it is evident that because there is food at these weddings and because there are people who are willing to offer OVC jobs, OVC individual agency is

triggered such that they are able to achieve what matters the most to them at that particular time.

### **7.2.5 Humour**

In addition to creativity and innovation, the study revealed that some OVC resorted to humour as a pathway to remain strong during difficult times. According to the participants, some OVC were able to ensure their resilience and inclusion by making light of the difficult and awkward social situations in which they often found themselves. According to the findings, some OVC often made jokes about their OVC label and about their adverse circumstances. This is highlighted in the following excerpt:

*OVC can really be funny kids you know. Sometimes when you make an announcement like: all OVC must remain after this class, the OVC will start shouting like, hey all those whose parents are in England should remain behind, hahaha.... I think this is a way to camouflage their pain and defend themselves from breaking down. It really helps them; they just laugh out loud and make fun as if they have just accepted their situation. It's like they want to laugh at themselves so that the other children have nothing to laugh at (Guidance and Counselling Teacher C).*

The excerpt above indicates that some OVC have the competence to transform negative social encounters in their lives. The illustration above shows how when labelled differently, some OVC turn that label to mean something that is more exciting and by so doing soften the effects of being seen differently by others. They make light of a moment in which their marginalisation by others is clearly outlined. They show that they are aware of how the absence of their parents is perceived, and therefore pre-empt and diffuse the negative comments made by their peers creating a new label which portrays them as children whose families enjoy the privileged status of international travel. By performing humour, other OVC are able to craft pathways that enable their resilience and social inclusion in the environments in which they live. They clearly use irony to anticipate and counter the negative/deficit perceptions of them as lacking and “other”. From the laughter that accompanies Guidance and Counselling Teacher C’s comments, one gets a sense of the positive teacher-OVC relationship which OVC humour has opened room for.

The above-given citation is supported by another participant who stated that:

*Some of my friends are OVC. These guys just tell endless funny stories, and I laugh all the time when I am with them. When we sit together, there is no talking about classy things, we just laugh at all the funny stories that we talk about in the group* (Learner Participant 32, questionnaires).

The excerpt above brings to the fore the extent of the funniness that OVC are able to bring into their situations. From the participant's articulations that; *These guys just tell endless funny stories, and I laugh all the time when I am with them*, the acts of performing humour and how it mitigates social exclusion for OVC is apparent. As OVC tell funny stories, they change how others see them in society. Rather than being seen as undesirable and subordinate beings (as highlighted by the findings in the previous chapter), OVC in this instance come across as children who want to be happy, enjoy life and make others laugh with them. By so doing, other children want to associate with them and that promotes their social inclusion. Seemingly, their ability to construct funny stories enables them to influence their environment such that they experience social inclusion. By acting in a humorous way, OVC advance their acceptance and friendship with others, consequently; creating a platform for relational agency (as will be discussed in the next chapter).

The findings on humour as a resilience-enhancing component for OVC is supported by Tagalidou et al. (2018). According to these authors, humour is able to lessen stress and promote the well-being of individuals who encounter negative life experiences. From the findings articulated above, it is evident that when OVC resort to humour, they adopt a strategy that will enable them to reframe their misfortunes and face their fears in a manner that provides detachment from the negative experiences they encounter in their lives (Southwick & Charney, 2018).

### **7.3 Summary**

This section has discussed how OVC as autonomous beings enable their inclusion, resilience and wellbeing in general. From the acts of responsible agency which they perform in their everyday lives, it is apparent that OVC do not see themselves as victims but as social actors who can manipulate and navigate the environment such that they achieve what matters the most to them at that time.

The findings highlighting OVC as responsible agents who utilise their individual agency to circumvent the risks which threaten their inclusion, resilience and wellbeing in general, bring

another perspective to the conceptualisation of inclusive education. From the findings, this study makes the presupposition that inclusive education for OVC is not only about what others do for them as children from marginalised groups, but it is also about the actions that they take to diffuse the adverse circumstances in which they often find themselves such that their resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing is facilitated. While the guidelines stipulated by UNESCO (1994) seem to place emphasis on how schools should accommodate all learners including those from marginalised groups; this study adds that, schools should also be accommodative of the skills and knowledge that these learners (from marginalised groups such as OVC) bring in as a way in which they can be better supported. Schools should harness the skills and knowledge that OVC demonstrate regarding their livelihood. Since the findings have revealed that OVC are determined and optimistic beings who set goals for themselves and strive to achieve those goals, teachers could enhance this characteristic by ensuring that they also set high (but achievable) goals for OVC. They should not expect less from them because of their status as OVC and because of the adversity they encounter in their lives. Teacher' high expectations regarding OVC performance may stimulate the determination that OVC have towards their education. Furthermore, the findings have revealed OVC's creativity and innovativeness. Schools could support OVC through offering skills-based education that will develop these characteristics in OVC. Creating avenues which will enable OVC to develop and utilise their skills could enhance OVC resilience and wellbeing. This means that the concept of education for OVC should be 'decolonised'. Education should not only be the transference of knowledge and skills that prepare children to serve the capitalist, but it should be about teaching all children including OVC entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to support themselves.

Inclusive education for this study therefore is not only about the accommodation of, but is also about how OVC are supported such that the actions they take and the performances they make as they strive for inclusion, resilience and wellbeing in general are effective. This observation therefore generally supports the view that, inclusive education, resilience and wellbeing for OVC is facilitated when a multi-dimensional approach is engaged. It is when an inclusive agency approach is adopted; an approach that is inclusive of their individual capabilities that OVC will experience inclusion, resilience and wellbeing in general.

The following section presents, analyses and discusses findings relating to hidden resilience. It shows how sometimes OVC strength and resolve to remain in education and to experience general well-being rests in them engaging in activities that perceives deleteriously.

## 7.4 Hidden Resilience

Other findings revealed acts of individual agency which are grounded in the concept of hidden resilience. Hidden resilience in this study refers to the elements which the community might view as anti-social, deviant or delinquent which OVC utilize to ensure their survival (Ungar, 2004).

According to the findings of the study, in the absence of familial support which could enable OVC to access the resources they needed, some OVC engaged in thievery as a pathway to access those resources. These findings are illustrated in the following excerpts:

*My brother always goes out and pretend to play at the neighbour's place. He then takes pencils, books or small pieces of soap from our neighbours so that we can write our homework and bath in the morning, (Learner Participant 43, message in a bottle).*

From the above-given extract, the component of autonomy is brought to the fore. It is apparent that in the absence of familial support through which they could access the resources needed to enhance learning and maintain basic hygiene, OVC become self-directing agents who create pathways to access those resources. While the pathways created may be unconventional, from Learner Participant 43's account, it is evident that this pathway enables him to access the resources he needs for his education.

In addition to thievery, the study unveiled that OVC also engaged in illegal forms of businesses such as the marijuana (dagga) trade to enable their wellbeing and inclusion into education. The findings revealed that, OVC rather than their non-OVC counterparts were willing to take the risks of engaging in this trade. These observations are highlighted in the following excerpt:

*The marijuana trade is really booming around here, really booming. We are losing a lot of children to this thing, especially OVC. Because they do not have anyone to provide for them, the dagga growers approach them to work in the dagga fields. Sometimes those relatives and friends who have dropped out of school and are pursuing dagga growing on a full time, brag about the money they are making and they tell the others that they are wasting their time. They buy cars and brag then drag them out of school. Some of these children who come to school and also do dagga even offer us loans when they make their money...hahaha (Guidance and Counselling Teacher B).*

The excerpt given above reveal how OVC utilise engagements in illicit trade as a trajectory to enable their wellbeing. Although these excerpts reveal the concept of ‘hidden’ resilience that enable OVC wellbeing, these excerpts also reveal a shift from the goals that OVC set for themselves with regards to education. While previous findings revealed how OVC were striving to ensure that they remain in the classroom, this group of OVC seem to view education as a secondary goal and see making money as the number one priority. This reveals how OVC autonomy challenges education as an ideological State apparatus which reproduce for the capitalist system (Althusser, 1971). From the statement that *They become owners of the fields*, OVC challenge the norm of children having to acquire an education so that they enable the wheels of production in the capitalist world to churn continuously (Althusser, 1971). As they generate their own finances through the cultivation of dagga, they become entrepreneurs who engender their own money to ensure their wellbeing.

While it is clear that engaging in the marijuana trade enables OVC resilience, it is also worth noting that involvement in this trade places OVC at risk of being considered as undesirable by others in the community. From the teacher’s statement that a lot of OVC seem to be getting absorbed by *this thing*, it is clear that engagement in marijuana use and trade is a practice that is not acceptable in this society<sup>4</sup>. It is evident that although OVC have agency and work towards contributing and shaping the resources within the environment, the structures in society remain formidable and unaccommodating towards the efforts they make.

Furthermore, the study indicated that OVC girls utilized transactional sexual activities as trajectories to enable their inclusion and general wellbeing. The findings revealed that some OVC girls engaged in sexual work in return for money and other resources they needed for their welfare. When asked how OVC cope with the experiences they encountered, the general response from the participants was that OVC girls engaged in prostitution as a way of supporting their basic needs. This finding is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*Some of the OVC girls have to sleep with older men to get money for school and food.*

*Some of them do it because they also want to look nice like their friends. They become*

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<sup>4</sup> The negative attitudes towards marijuana have historical roots related to colonization whereby colonial settlers believed that the use of marijuana resulted in immorality, insanity, petulance and dangerous criminal incitement in indigenous populations in Southern Africa (Paterson, 2009).

*students by day and sex workers by night. When things get too difficult for me, I sometimes think of joining them.* (Learner Participant 39, questionnaires).

While the afore-given excerpt highlights OVC capability to create pathways for survival, the repercussions of engaging in transactional sexual activities cannot be ignored. Learner Participant 15 highlighted that:

*My friend lost both her parents. She lives alone now with her younger sisters and brothers. The women in the village hate her. They say horrible things about her, like if you can't find your husband, go and look for him at her place. One of the women in the village beat her up because she takes her husband's money. The elders in the village had to call her (my friend) to the chief's place for this* (Learner Participant 15 from the questionnaires).

From the excerpt given above, the negative perception that the society has towards OVC girls' engagement in transactional sex comes across quite clearly. It is evident that sexual engagements with older men are seen as an abominable act by older members of the community. Young girls who engage in sexual relationships for monetary purposes with married men are beaten up and even sent to the highest office of power which in this instance, is the Chief. While the act of transactional sex enables resilience and inclusion for OVC in some aspects, it clearly places them at risk for further marginalisation in their communities. From the participant's articulations that her friend is beaten up by the wife and called in by the Chief, it shows that the relationships they have with others in the community are adversely impacted by their acts which are seen as deviant. It is evident that while OVC have agency, their agency is not in isolation but is much grounded in the collaborations they have with others around them. The relationships they have with the community (as will be discussed in detail in the following chapter) is a critical resource which OVC utilize to enable their resilience and inclusion.

In addition to transactional sex, the findings also revealed that were perceived to be violent children who often bullied others in school and in the communities in which they lived. When asked what others thought of OVC, one participant highlighted that:

*OVC are not well liked in our area, even at school. People think that OVC are very violent people. They are always in trouble in school because they are always fighting and beating up other children. The other children are very scared of some of them. They*

*will take your pencil, and take your food sometimes and when you tell on, you will really pay for that, (Learner Participant 11, questionnaires).*

The narration above, reveals how the loss of or parent(s) or encounters of adversity results in OVC engaging in antagonistic conduits which create the perception that OVC are generally violent and troublesome children in society. As observed by Murray et al. (2020), OVC because of the adverse circumstances they often encounter, are more likely to engage in behaviour that society perceives to be problematic, such as aggression. The conglomeration of pain, depression, anxiety and stress often results in them resorting to such antisocial behaviours (Murray et al., 2020). Without a doubt, the adversity which OVC experience in their daily lives, results in them adopting pathways that are characterised by aggression and as a result, they end up not being readily embraced by others in society.

The findings discussed in this section are consistent with literature which avers that resilience is also a culturally constructed concept (Ungar, 2008). Ungar argues that the way resilience is understood and defined by a community has an impact on how it manifests in individuals. The findings have shown that in cultural contexts where certain behaviours are seen as outside the norm and expectations of that community, those acts are not seen as acts of resilience rather as negative developmental outcomes. As the findings reveal, the tensions between OVC and the culture in which they encounter their daily experiences project them not as resilient children but as misfits in society. While their acts enable their resilience, these acts are not encouraged as they are not perceived to be components of resilience.

Furthermore, the findings on hidden resilience as articulated in the above captions bring a different perspective to the conception of resilience. While the universal perception projects that resilience is a concept that is tied to the normative judgements relating to particular outcomes (Ungar, 2004), hidden resilience challenges the perception of resilience as good outcomes despite risk and vulnerability. It asks questions on what good outcomes actually are, and for whom those outcomes are actually said to be good (Ungar, 2004). It challenges society's numerous ethical codes which are often unwritten, fluid and contextual (Ungar, 2004). It brings forth other forms of knowledge which may be viewed as unconventional, but enable OVC resilience and inclusion into education and into life in general. It brings to the fore a form of resilience which is precarious and double edged in that, while it affords some avenues for inclusion, it also has the effect of excluding OVC in other ways.

## 7.5 Summary

This section has discussed ‘hidden’ resilience as a form of responsible agency that enables OVC to access inclusion in education and life in general. From the findings, it transpires that the exclusion of OVC is perpetuated by the culture and expectations within society. These expectations become a barrier to OVC autonomy. They become grounds on which social marginalisation is reproduced. This study therefore takes the stance that exclusion is a social construct also suggested in Slee (2011). Based on the findings, this study argues that it is the boundaries that society sets in terms of structures and cultural practices which disable OVC agency and result in their exclusion from education and life in general.

Additionally, this study argues that, how childhood is perceived and constructed in society also determines the success or failure of inclusive education for OVC. When childhood is perceived as a stage at which children are incapable beings who are incompetent and rely on adults for their livelihood (Skolnic, 1975), or viewed as people who are merely younger than the adult person and are still to acquire the proficiencies which adults have (Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014); OVC agency may be inhibited. As brought to the fore by the findings, when OVC engage in money making activities, the community frowns upon that act because it is believed that at this stage OVC should be in school and not out there making money. When OVC assert themselves and refuse to take punishment readily, they are perceived as insolent beings because typically, in traditional communities, the voices of children are silenced and children remain invisible in the relationships they have with adults (Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014). In the traditional communities, any courageousness to question or stand up to the adult is a symbol of disrespect to the adult (Ndofirepi & Shumba, 2014). Clearly, such perceptions could hinder responsible agency in OVC and as a result create a foundation on which their exclusion from education and from life in general is exacerbated.

Based on the above arguments, this study takes the position that OVC be perceived as “beings and becomings” (Uprichard, 2007, p. 304). This stance argues that while OVC may be in a state of becoming adults and could still lack certain skills that enable them to resolve some of the issues of adversity that impact on their inclusion and wellbeing, in some instances they are social actors who actively construct their experiences of inclusion in education as highlighted in the findings. This approach (beings and becomings) to viewing ‘child’/ ‘childhood’ for OVC enables the understanding that while they have agency and perform acts of responsibility that enable their resilience and inclusion, OVC are children whose agency is situated within the

support of the environment. When the environment is not supportive, OVC cannot fully traverse the adversity they encounter in their daily lives.

The findings as articulated in this section show that OVC resilience and inclusion are hindered mainly by the values, traditions and the views that the community hold on childhood. While in some instances, the culture of a given society is said to be critical in promoting resilience in OVC (as will be shown in the following chapter), the findings in this chapter indicate that the culture of a society can suppress resilience and inclusion for OVC. As reflected by the findings, it is evident that OVC are seen as in the state of ‘becoming’ and for that reason, their voices are silenced by those who view themselves as ‘beings’ within the communities. While OVC show individual capabilities of generating pathways that could enable their wellbeing, the already established norms and cultural practices seem to suppress their agency. Clearly, there is a culture conflict whereby pathways that are seen as antisocial, delinquent and unacceptable by some, are viewed as most efficient by OVC. This study proposes a ‘decluttering’ of culture in society. While societal values, norms and traditions are meant to regulate natural societies (Dignum & Hofstede, 2011), there is need for communities to ask questions that will interrogate social structures which are oppressive towards others within the society. Dignum and Hofstede (2011) argue that social norms evolve. Based on this argument, this study proposes that society starts thinking of how some of the pathways which are deemed to be ‘wayward’ can be harnessed and utilised effectively to facilitate inclusion, resilience and general wellbeing for marginalised groups like OVC.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

The findings discussed in this chapter bring to the fore the tensions between structural factors and individual choice. They have highlighted how conventional structures offer little support to enable OVC inclusion and wellbeing in general and how OVC fight hardship as they strive for inclusion. The discussions in this chapter also reveal that, while OVC have the capability to make individual choices, their agency cannot be separated from an understanding of the enabling or constraining effects of structure (Edwards, 2007). Clearly, in this instance, the conventional structures offer little support and in other cases even actively undermine OVC wellbeing. While that may be the case, the findings discussed in this chapter also suggest that by understanding their agency and taking the responsibility of interacting with the resources around them, OVC are able to create trajectories that ensure their inclusion in education and in life generally. This suggests that OVC are aware of how their inclusion in education and into

life in general can be expedited. Conversely; our understanding or conceptualization of inclusive education should be modified to place more focus on recognising and responding to OVC agency and the contributions they make. Environmental structures could be more flexible and accommodative of the capabilities of OVC and also find a way in which their hidden resilience can be harnessed as trajectories that will enable their inclusion into education and into life in general.

As stipulated in the above discussions, the ability for OVC to perform responsible agency is not in isolation, but it is embedded in the social structures which exist in the worlds in which OVC live. These social structures include the relationships that OVC have with others around them. The next chapter looks at how the ability for OVC to relate, work alongside others and ask for support enhances their agency. The following chapter therefore presents, analyses and discusses the theme of Relational Agency as it relates to OVC resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general.

## CHAPTER 8

### RELATIONAL AGENCY

#### 8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the ability for OVC to deliberately engage with the environment in a manner that disrupted the risks and vulnerabilities they encountered in their lives. It examined how through responsible agency, OVC were able to perform extraordinary efforts that enabled them to overcome the oppressive, debilitating effects of excluding social structures in their world. As indicated by the findings of the previous chapter, the ability of OVC to perform responsible agency is not in isolation, but it is embedded within the social structures that exist in the worlds in which OVC live. One of the critical structures through which OVC are able to manipulate the environment is the relationships they have with others. While the previous chapter analysed OVC agency in terms of their efforts as individuals, this chapter will be concerned with their agency as a collaborative phenomenon. This chapter, therefore, presents, analyses and discusses the findings with regards to **Relational Agency** as a theme that emerged from the data.

Relational agency refers to the capacity for a person or persons to work alongside others by utilizing the resources that others have to offer in order to achieve what they deem necessary at that point in life (Edwards, 2007). Relational agency, just like responsible agency, is grounded in agency as a founding concept. However, unlike responsible agency, relational agency is more collaborative in nature. While responsible agency focuses on how the individual achieves their goals through shaping the environment around them, relational agency centres on collectivism. It is premised on mutual relationships as the source of resilience, inclusion and well-being for the individual. While these concepts may seem to be independent from each, they do speak to each other, as will be revealed in the sections that follow. Edwards (2007) argues that individuals are able to take responsibility for their progression through the support and resources afforded to them by others in their environment. This points to the relationship that exists between the concept of responsible agency and relational agency.

In this study, relational agency refers to the ability of OVC to utilize the relationships they have with others as trajectories to disrupt the adversities they encounter in their lives. It is about their ability to engage with the world alongside others (Edwards, 2007) and how they utilize the

relationships they have with others as pathways to enable their resilience and inclusion into education. It speaks to OVC capacity to identify and utilize the support of others in order to transform the adverse circumstances in which they often find themselves (Edwards & D'arcy, 2006). Of importance is that relational agency is not about creating and encouraging dependency, rather, it is about encouraging individual capacity to both seek and offer support when connecting with the world (Edwards & Mackenzie, 2005).

From the afore-given discussions, it is apparent that, unlike responsible agency which assumes an approach of independence, relational agency is about interdependence. Relational agency fosters an understanding that; while OVC are social actors who have the capacity to disrupt adversity and exclusion, their agency tends to be exercised in joint action with others. Clearly, relational agency portrays OVC as collaborators, ones who are interdependent and whose resilience and inclusion emerge from their relatedness to others (Burkitt, 2016). In this instance, inclusive education becomes a collaborative exercise. It adopts a definition which showcases it as an enterprise that is rooted in the social relations that OVC have with others around them.

In addition to being a concept that captures the capacity to align one's thoughts and actions with those of others to make sense and act upon the world in which one exists (Edwards, 2005), relational agency also speaks to how the joint action of subjects works effectively to have bearing on an activity which is being worked on (Edwards, 2005). From Edwards (2005)'s articulations, this study argues that relational agency in this instance speaks to the ability for OVC to work alongside others to navigate and mitigate the adverse encounters which they experience in their daily lives. It is about how the activities of marginalization and exclusion are mitigated when professionals across different local structures which are designed to support the welfare of OVC amalgamate resources which OVC can utilize to circumnavigate adversity. Relational agency, therefore, is about transformation. It is about how adversity as discussed in previous chapters, is transformed when a wider range of ideas and resources are pooled and brought together to act on activities of hardship, misfortune and difficulty.

The findings unveiled that OVC resilience and inclusion occur within cooperative relationships where OVC work alongside professionals and others in an attempt to disrupt structures which could perpetuate their exclusion. The different forms of relationships which enabled OVC resilience and inclusion are highlighted in **Educational-based relationships** and **Social-oriented relationships** which are the subthemes generated from data. These different forms of relationships are discussed in the subsections below.

## **8.2 Educational-based relationships**

The study uncovered that the school as an educational institution, played a significant role in promoting resilience, inclusion and the general wellbeing of OVC. According to the study, the relationships which OVC had with professionals within the school setting, had the potential to create a foundation on which OVC agency proliferated. Although parents, guardians or significant elders remain the most critical source of support for their children, it is noted that in the absence of these significant adults in their lives, positive relationships with their teachers and other professionals within the school environment served as important protective operations which improve social as well as educational outcomes for OVC (Luthar et al., 2015). The different school-based relationships which enable OVC resilience and inclusion into education within the school environment include teacher-oriented relationships, peer-based relationships and structurally-orientated relationships. These are discussed below.

### **8.2.1 Teacher-oriented relationships**

The findings to the study revealed that while OVC were autonomous beings, their autonomy was an interdependent phenomenon which hinged on the relationships that OVC had with their teachers in school. These relationships included their classroom teacher, Guidance and Counselling teachers and the head teachers in the school. From the findings it transpired that, OVC agency was facilitated when their teachers collaborated with other professionals to secure resources that would support OVC and when teachers collaborated directly with OVC in an Ubuntu-based manner. Subsequently, the subthemes to teacher-oriented relationships namely: Positive teacher-attitudes and distributed expertise are discussed below.

#### **8.2.1.1 Positive teacher-attitudes**

The study unveiled that OVC resilience and inclusion was facilitated through the positive relationships they had on a daily basis with their teachers. According to the findings, some teachers showed positive attitudes towards OVC. These teachers provided OVC with various resources which OVC needed for their wellbeing. These findings are highlighted in the following excerpts:

*My Head teacher is very kind. He knows that I am the one who takes care of my younger sisters and brothers at home. He often gives some OVC and myself some packages of*

*beans and samp from the kitchen to cook at home. This helps us to have something to eat during the weekend, (Learner Participant 35, message in a bottle).*

Learner Participant 35 added that:

*The teachers at school really help me a lot, especially the Guidance teacher. She always asks me how things are at home... you see she knows my situation. Sometimes when things are very bad, I go to her and ask for food and sometimes pads. When my mother's brother started his thing... I told the Guidance teacher and she went to the police. They arrested him (the uncle) and that made it stop. She feels like my mother. She is very helpful and kind to me (Learner Participant 35, message in a bottle).*

Positive attitudes towards OVC were not only shown by the school principal and Guidance and Counselling Teacher but by other teachers as well. This is captured in the following excerpts:

*The teachers also try to support OVC in a lot of ways. Sometimes OVC to come and work for the teachers during the weekends or when schools are closed. They wash and clean at the teachers' quarters. The teachers then pay for that child, like they money or sometimes buy this child uniforms for school. This also helps OVC to get money for school trips. (Guidance and Counselling Teacher A).*

When asked how OVC were supported, another participant revealed that:

*Sometimes OVC sell sweets and chips for the teachers at school. The teachers get stock (goods) from town and OVC sell for them. OVC then get some money for that. Sometimes the teachers also buy their stock and also some stock for OVC. Then the OVC sell for the teachers and sell for themselves and get a lot of pocket money (Learner Participant 49, questionnaires)*

The afore-given findings reveal a different perspective of teacher-learner relationship to that shown by other findings in the previous chapters. While in Chapter 6, the findings unveiled negative attitudes which boarded on malice and contempt by teachers towards OVC, these findings show positive teacher-learner relationship in schools. Unlike the participants who spoke of how the teachers made them cry and miss out on learning, these participants speak of how the teachers make them feel safe and cared for in school. The acts of kindness and responsibility as highlighted by Participant 19 enhance the ability to perform acts that will promote her resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general. As the teachers go beyond their professional roles as educators, they demonstrate caring and compassion towards the

participants which support the view that as noted by, in communities of Ubuntu, everyone is related to the other. Everyone is “a mother, or a father, brother or sister, aunt or uncle,” (Etieyibo, 2017, p. 322).

The findings discussed above reveal that positive teacher attitudes are protective factors that promote resilience in OVC. As maintained by some authors; it is when teachers listen to and treat all children with respect, promote a sense of determination, commitment and self-worth that resilience in OVC manifests (Cahill et al., 2015). As teachers take a personal interest and provide surrogate parenting by listening and being available to OVC such that they have someone they can confide in, their resilience and consequently, inclusion in education is expedited (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). This study therefore advances that while schools are educational spaces which are geared towards providing academic knowledge, in the absence of parental support, OVC’s positive relationships with teachers expedite resilience in OVC. It is these positive relationships that trigger the ability in OVC (Ungar, 2013) to perform acts of resilience which will enable their inclusion and wellbeing in general.

#### **8.2.1.2 Distributed expertise**

The findings of the study revealed that in addition to the positive attitudes which prompted them to provide OVC with the resources they needed, the teachers also worked in collaboration other professionals who worked in services that were geared towards supporting children. From the findings of the study, it transpired that when teachers worked together with other professionals, they tapped into the knowledge and skills of others and in so doing, a wider pool of resources that could support OVC was established. This finding is highlighted in the following excerpt:

*We talk about abuse, and the importance of reporting such things. Sometimes I actually go out and source additional support from the police domestic violence wing so they can talk to the learners on issues of domestic abuse, crime prevention. appropriate behavior, HIV/AIDS related issues, sexual issues, assertion, study habits, crime, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy (Guidance and Counselling Teacher A).*

The narration given above brings to the fore the concept of collaboration as a critical component of distributed expertise (Edwards 2007). From the excerpt given above, the collaboration between teachers and the local law enforcement unit on matters pertaining to the welfare of OVC is brought to the fore. From these articulations, it is clear that teachers

understand that while they may be professionals at teaching children subject content, their skills and knowledge outside their subject area may be limited. As the teachers work in conjunction with the police force on issues relating to the welfare of all children, knowledge and skills that will enable OVC wellbeing on matters relating to their safety and welfare within their communities is extended. By working with professionals in the area of law enforcement, the teachers ensure that there is a broader range of resources made available so that OVC may be equipped to confront the adverse experiences of abuse which were highlighted in previous chapters. This finding supports the view that resilience is a collaborative-intense concept (Cahill et al., 2015). According to these authors, resilience in vulnerable children is promoted by the links that the school establishes with other constituents in the community. As highlighted in the findings, bringing in professionals who are well-versed in their field to the school from the community enables children to get the appropriate support needed for their resilience and wellbeing.

In addition to working with professionals from the law enforcement unit, the findings also revealed that teachers collaborated with professionals from the health-care sector to support OVC on health and hygiene related matters. The findings highlighted that the head teachers usually worked in collaboration with health professionals from the Ministry of Health who visited the school once a year to conduct medical check-ups and to supply the schools with first-aid kits. This is supported by the following excerpt:

*There is a first aid box kit that we keep at the school. The head teacher collects all the medication from the Ministry of Health or sometimes when the nurses visit they give us more medicines. This helps the OVC a lot. They are often sick sisi. Most of them are HIV positive and they tell you that. So sometimes they get a headache or a tummy ache and we give them the medicine from the first aid box (Guidance and Counselling Teacher A).*

The above narration highlights how schools have been extended such that school-based trajectories for inclusion have become objects of activity that enable the participation of multiple practitioners at a time. It is patent that by working collaboratively with professionals from the Ministry of Health, OVC are able to access on-site visitations from nurses and get first aid when the need arises. This collaboration enhances OVC inclusion in a number of ways. As discussed in previous chapters, OVC experience financial shortages which often prohibits them from accessing medical care. When the school partners with the Ministry of Health and

have nurses visit the schools, OVC are able to access free medical attention. In addition, by being able to access medical services at school, OVC do not have to travel to the local clinics and wait in long queues which often resulted in them missing their lessons.

Although it is commendable that the schools have a first aid kit that is utilised to supply medication when needed, it is also worrying to note that the medication is administered by non-medical professionals. The articulations that: *sometimes they get a headache or a tummy ache and we give them the medicine from the first aid box*, indicates that the administration of medicines is done by the Guidance and Counselling teachers. The absence of a full-time medically trained professional to oversee the health of the children is evident. Having medication administered by Guidance and Counselling teachers who are not trained in medical matters may put the lives of OVC at risk.

Collaboration amongst professionals was also highlighted by findings that revealed how teachers worked with international organisations to provide the resources which OVC needed for their inclusion. These findings are evidenced in the following excerpt:

*The head-teacher talks to these NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and then OVC get supplies from the companies like World Vision who come to the school. The girls get the packs with their pads and the boys also get a pack but without the pads. These parcels are only for the OVC, not for all of us. When the OVC get them, they are happy, they will at least have soap to wash and some other things, (Learner Participant 44, questionnaires).*

The above excerpt brings to the fore how by working with others, teachers are able to support OVC more effectively. It is clear that in instances where they know that resources at the school are not available, teachers partner with other local services which are oriented towards supporting the wellbeing of OVC. By working alongside other international organizations, teachers are able to widen the scope of support such that OVC receive the resources they need for their welfare. It is also evident that working alongside other professionals enhance teacher' professionalism. As part of their profession, teachers need to ensure the holistic development, and wellbeing of children (Save the Children, 2014). While teachers may be trained on issues of teaching and learning, other aspects of child-development could be beyond their scope. Therefore, when they collaborate with other professionals, they are able to access the skills and knowledge which they lack such that their learners (including OVC) are supported. The impact

of collaborating with other professionals as teachers strive to support OVC is brought to the fore by Guidance and Counselling Teacher C who articulates that:

*When the students see the PEPFAR van, which brings the dignity packs to the school, all learning stops. Wuuu...There is loud cheering and shouting and banging of desks in the classrooms. The joy on those children's faces just tells you how much those children appreciate the packs"* (Guidance and Counselling Teacher C, interviews).

The afore-given excerpt reveals the effectiveness that collaboration between professionals has in transforming adversity for OVC. The reactions of loud cheering and banging of desks show explicitly how much OVC appreciate the resources they receive from PEPFAR. While in previous chapters it transpired that OVC were self-conscious about their state of hygiene, encountered affronts from the teachers and were socially excluded by their peers; the arrival of these resources provided OVC with a pathway to navigate these adverse experiences. Clearly, the soap that comes with the pack will not only enable OVC to wash their uniforms and have a bath, but it also means that OVC may stop stealing soap from their neighbours (as it was highlighted in previous chapters), which was an act that further ostracised them from the community. Additionally, by receiving sanitary pads, OVC girls may be protected from the health hazards which they may experience as a result of using newspapers, toilet papers and leaves which they utilise when they have their period.

The finding highlighted above supports literature which claims that international organisations are protective factors which play a significant role in promoting resilience in OVC. UNICEF (2017), argues that international organisations have the capacity to build resilience and reduce vulnerability by supporting the capacities of local systems and structures as they work towards building resilience in their communities. By providing various resources such as social protection which could be cash vouchers, food and other needed materials, resilience in vulnerable groups (including OVC) is expedited (UNICEF, 2017). Based on these findings, this study observes that, in addition to international organisations being the drivers of inclusive education (as highlighted in Chapter 2), international organisations are also protective factors which enable resilience in OVC.

In addition to collaborating with NGO's, teachers also worked together with pastors from the local churches to support OVC resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing. The findings revealed that teachers often invited pastors from the different churches to minister to the children once a week. It appears that these services created harmony and promoted values

among the learners which reduced OVC vulnerability to exclusion. Furthermore, the services also enhanced resilience in OVC and enabled them to remain strong and hopeful despite the adversities they encountered. These views are encapsulated in the following excerpts:

*The school also has services for the learners. On Fridays, we have chapel and the children come for worship and prayer. The Head Teacher invites different pastors to the services and they teach our children to be good and stop all these bad habits. They know that God is watching them all the time (Guidance and Counsellor Teacher C).*

The effect that the religious services have on OVC are indicated in the following excerpt:

*God is God for all of us. I might be going through all this right now, but I know that if I am good and holy, God will repay me with good things. Our pastor (the pastor who holds services at the school on Fridays) tells us to pray very hard. So, I know that God will answer. When others laugh at us, God sees. He will answer one day on my behalf. He will give me the good things that I ask for (Learner Participant 25 message in a bottle).*

The above findings reveal how teachers tap into the skills and knowledge of the pastors around them as a resource to enable OVC resilience and inclusion. Through the religious services, OVC are able to work on their exclusion in a number of ways. As acting subjects, they engage in a dialectical relationship whereby while adversity threatens their inclusion, they also work on it by understanding it as a situation which can be rectified if they externalize acts of goodwill.

This finding articulated above supports the view that educational resilience is promoted when schools offer culturally-embedded extra-curricular activities such as religious services during school hours. Thwala (2013) notes that OVC's resilience is advanced when they are offered opportunities to pray and listen to bible readings from adults or fellow learners at school. As highlighted by the findings, the culture of having religious services within the school enhances resilience in OVC.

Although these findings support the view that culturally embedded activities such as religion enhance resilience, this study makes the observation that these structures seem to be based on Christianity as the only religion to be practiced in schools. This study argues that if schools accommodate only one religious domination, then resilience in other OVC who are not of the Christian faith could be inhibited. As highlighted in the Eswatini International Religious

Freedom Report (2019), ninety percent of the population in Eswatini are Christians, two percent are Muslims and the remaining are part of Eswatini traditional religion and other forms of religion. This means that while ninety percent of the learners will be included with regards to religious services, the remaining ten percent will experience exclusion. This goes against the statutes of inclusive education which advocates for the inclusion of all children regardless of difference of religion (UNESCO, 1994).

### **8.2.2 Peer-based capital**

Other educationally-oriented relationships that supported OVC in school were those which OVC had with their peers. According to the findings, these friendships provided OVC with multiple resources which they needed while in school. Some of these relationships were as a result of the social clubs through which OVC and non-OVC got together to speak of issues pertinent to the youth. It transpired that during these meetings, issues of OVC adversity often came up and from there other children provided OVC with some of the resources they needed. Guidance and Counselling Teacher B articulated that:

*There is a social club at the school where while I am the one in charge, the children actually run this club. We meet every Wednesday as the compassionate club and we talk about very serious things that happen especially to OVC. The children talk about their experiences and others who have the same tell them how they actually survived. When OVC do not have what they need. They come to me. Sometimes I don't have what they ask for. I just ask for donations from the other teachers and, it really helps the OVC, (Guidance and Counselling Teacher B).*

Findings on how OVC utilised friendship to remain strong amidst adversity were also highlighted by OVC themselves. This is what Learner Participant 1 had to say regarding this matter:

*Some of my friends are not OVC, but they are not those who think highly of themselves. They are humble and down to earth. We have been together in the group (social club) for a long time. We are experiencing the same teenage experiences. We talk about that, sometimes. They always encourage me to study and that I must not let my situation put me down. Sometimes one of my friends in the group... the one who is too kind shares her food with me, even her pocket money so that I buy pads. Sometimes she asks her*

*mother and she gives me some of her old clothes... she is very kind.* (Learner Participant 1, interviews).

The above captions reveal how friendship enabled OVC resilience and inclusion in education. From the excerpts given above, it is evident that the relationships established with other children in school enable OVC to access the resources they need for their education and for their livelihood in general. As they work in collaboration with other learners, OVC are able to access financial, emotional and physical resources which enable their inclusion. It is also evident that when given the opportunity to exercise autonomy, children including OVC are able to create effective trajectories which enable their resilience, inclusion and wellbeing. As argued by Nkhata et al. (2008), change including growth and transformation (which are components of resilience) is brought about by how co-agents relate in social relationships. The trust, commitment and strong bonds that tie the agents together in a social relationship, affect the choices that agents within a relationship make (Nkhata et al., 2018). From the statement made by the Learner Participant that; *They always encourage me to study and that I must not let my situation put me down*, it can be deduced that the interpersonal relationship she has with her friends provides encouragement as a resource which can enhance the participant's drive to do well with regards to her educational endeavours. From the encouragement she gets, this participant could make life choices that can improve her academic performance. Also, the encouragement she gets from her friends could enable the participant to experience a sense of recognition and validation (De Mol et al., 2018).

The findings on how peer social capital is a conduit through which OVC can remain resilient in the face of adversity support the views of Skovdal and Ogutu (2012). In a study they conducted, these authors uncovered that resilience in OVC was promoted by friends who often shared their food with OVC who did not have anything to eat at school. Furthermore, the study unveiled that the friends OVC had also helped them with domestic responsibilities and with income generation projects (Skovdal & Ogutu, 2012). Similarly, a study conducted by Tadesse et al. (2014) revealed that while there were no formal structures to support OVC in Ethiopia, OVC had reported that they often relied on the social support they received from their peers to remain strong in the face of adversity. This study therefore proposes that in OVC, friendship is an environmental tool that enables their resilience and inclusion in education. It is a protective factor that cushions adversity and enables them to navigate the adversity they encounter in their daily experiences. It supports Theron and Theron's (2010) claims that friendships within the communities afforded OVC with platforms where they could talk to their peers about matters

troubling them as well as opportunities for social acceptance and the development of positive identity as they interact with peers from non-OVC groups.

### **8.3 Structurally-based relationships**

The findings also revealed that while teacher-oriented relationships were at the forefront of OVC resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing, other relationships which were based on the formal structures set up by the Ministry of Education and Training in schools also contributed significantly to OVC resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general. While teacher oriented relationships brought to the fore how teachers supported OVC in their capacity as teachers, the structurally-based relationships approach brings to the fore how the formal structures that have been put up in schools through the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Training, support OVC. These structures include Guidance and Counselling, the school feeding programme, the OVC fund and safety and security. These structures are discussed below.

#### **8.3.1. Guidance and Counselling**

The findings revealed that OVC were supported through the relationships they had with their teachers which were created through the structure of Guidance and Counselling. From the findings of the study, it transpired that the government of Eswatini has mandated that in every school, there be at least one Guidance and Counselling teacher to ensure that all children including OVC receive support on issues relating to their education and wellbeing. The findings highlighted that the relationships that OVC had with their teachers emanating from the guidance and counselling often provided OVC with the emotional and physical support they needed. This is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*As the Guidance and Counselling teacher, I am the one who they can talk to about everything in their life (the OVC). When a learner is sick, I take care of the learner. I give them sanitary pads if they need it. When a learner is in trouble like they have a case involving drug abuse, drinking, I am part of the disciplinary hearing and advocate for the learner. Sometimes the learner has been beaten up at home, you need to be involved. As Guidance and Counselling teacher I have to speak up for the learner, bring in all the angles, try and bring in understanding of what could have promoted this behavior from the learner. Also I look into the sentence form of punishment given to the learner: Is it fair? Won't it exclude the learner from learning? I bring a supportive angle for the child (Guidance and Counselling Teacher A).*

The above narration reveals how through the relationships they have with the Guidance and Counselling teachers, OVC are able to access the advocacy they needed during disciplinary hearings in school. From the articulations made by the participant, it shows that while they may be social actors who may perform acts that change their adverse circumstances, the rigidity of some structures within the school system required the availability of the Guidance and Counselling Teacher to ensure justice and fairness for OVC. While it has been mentioned in other chapters that OVC are often treated as subordinate and unworthy in their worlds, the afore-given articulation reveals that the teacher-pupil relationship that they have with the Guidance and Counselling teachers enabled them to access the support they need with regard to their behaviour in school. Through the Guidance and Counselling teacher's representation, OVC voices are heard and verdicts which could be obstacles that propagate their exclusion are mitigated. The presence of a Guidance and Counselling teacher ensures that OVC are treated equitably and fairly, just like other learners whose parents are able to be part of their children's disciplinary hearing. The narration given by the participant also reveals the dialectical nature of relational agency.

In addition to providing advocacy for OVC, the findings revealed that Guidance and Counselling also provided OVC with skills and knowledge necessary to counteract adversity. According to the findings, through the Guidance and Counselling period, schools were able to set aside time through which learners were taught on how they could traverse adversity in their lives. In addition, the study revealed that the Guidance and Counselling teachers during this time, also helped OVC with choosing subjects that could enable them to access careers of their choice when they completed school. This is captured in the following excerpt:

*As the Guidance and Counselling teacher, I talk to the children in terms of hygiene, cleanliness. The importance of it, how to stay clean., hygiene, abuse and career options. I also help them with issues of subject choices, application to university and filling in scholarship forms from the government (Guidance and Counselling Teacher A).*

By working together with their teachers, the support that OVC receive in relation to how they can develop the skills they need to cushion the adverse circumstance in which they often find themselves is apparent. As they engage in learning during the Guidance and Counselling period, OVC are encouraged to perform independent acts that will support the achievement of the goals they set for themselves a process regarded by De Mol et al. (2018) as 'positive influencing'. It is clear that through this relationship, OVC may experience motivation and

prompting that could enable them to make decisions and perform acts that will promote their resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general.

Other findings brought to the fore how OVC agency was tied to the traditional or cultural components that teachers brought into their teachings. This is highlighted by Guidance and Counselling Teacher C who stated that:

*We teach them Sisi on how to stay away from trouble. You see during the siSwati period; we talk about tinganekwane (folktales) that show that when you behave well you will be rewarded. We talk about bad behavior; we ask what they could have done if maybe they were La Khwekhwana (an OVC character who experienced significant adversity in one of the siSwati books, (Guidance and Counselling Teacher C).*

From the narration given by the participant in the above extract, it comes across that OVC autonomy is also promoted when educational structures incorporate the culture and traditions of the environment in which they live. The excerpt given above, reveals that when teachers bring in content that contains the cultural values and philosophies which are part of their everyday life, OVC are potentially able to acquire skills and knowledge which are relevant in their daily experiences. As the teachers bring in local folktales which show how OVC characters encounter adversity and how they are able to remain resilient and achieve their goals in the end; they transform the curriculum such that it becomes a supportive structure which specifically addresses the needs of OVC. As argued Saylor et al. (2017), traditional ecological knowledge has the capacity to contribute meaningfully to resilience. Given that it is knowledge in practice and happens on a daily basis (Saylor et al., 2017), it resonates with OVC daily experiences.

The findings on how resilience is enhanced when schools incorporate the culture of the community into its curriculum support the claims made by Reyes et al. (2013). According to these scholars, schools which respect and incorporate the culture of the local community into teaching and learning promote educational resilience in OVC. When schools fail to incorporate the values and the culture of the local community, OVC may feel disconnected to the learning process, which might eventually weaken their ability to stay in education (Reyes et al., 2013).

### **8.3.2 The School Feeding Program**

In addition to Guidance and Counselling, the study revealed that the government of Eswatini had established the school feeding programme as an inclusive strategy to ensure the wellbeing

of children from marginalised groups such as OVC. According to the findings, the Ministry of Education and Training in Eswatini mandates that all schools provide all children who were in attendance with at least one meal per day at school. When asked how OVC were supported at the school, the following articulations were made by Guidance and Counselling Teacher B:

*The food is the greatest form of support to OVC. They cannot wait for the food, literally. They get excited when it is almost time for lunch. There is always a scramble for the food. After lunch you can see that haai... something has happened... (hahaha). You ask... you get answers. However, we only serve one meal a day which is lunch because there is a shortage of funds. For other learners, the meal they have at school is the only food they will have. If they eat lunch at school, the next meal they will have will be at the school the next day (Guidance and Counselling Teacher B, interviews).*

The narrations given above highlight how school feeding programmes as cultural tools found within the relationships that OVC have with others enhance their inclusion in education. It is evident that before meals, participation in learning is minimal and that significant engagement in learning for OVC begins once they have had their meal which is provided by the school. From the statement that; *After lunch you can see that haai... something has happened... (hahaha). You ask... you get answers*, it is clear that through the food received, hunger as an object of exclusion has been mitigated and as a result, learning for OVC is enhanced.

Also the graveness of OVC hunger experiences are also brought to the fore by the articulations of this participant. It is evident that OVC experiences of hunger are quite real. The Guidance and Counselling teacher attests to the view made by other participants in previous chapters on how the food that OVC eat at school is sometimes the only meal they get for the day. The excitement and scramble for the meals suggests that these children might not have had anything to eat. Hence, when the government provides food through the meals that OVC have at school, OVC ability to engage in the ongoing learning activities in school is enhanced.

Other findings also brought to the fore how younger OVC who were not in school were supported through the school-based feeding programs. This is captured in the following excerpt:

*I go to school only for the food. I get my ration, eat a little bit then put the rest in a plastic bag for my younger brothers and sister at home. When I get home, I dish out for them from the food I have brought with me, then we all have something to eat before*

*we sleep. It has truly helped me and lifted some weight from my shoulders. These days we are eating meat at school it's like Christmas for me and my sibling* (Learner Participant 22, message in a bottle).

The findings on school feeding programs as educationally-oriented structures through which the school leadership supports OVC is supported by Nsibandé (2016). In a study she conducted in Eswatini, this author uncovered that the school feeding program was an inclusionary mechanism which contributed to the enrolment, retention and participation of OVC in learning activities in schools. When schools avail food as a resource to mitigate hunger, the objective of schooling for OVC is extended beyond that of merely attaining an education to that of also satisfying basic needs such as accessing food and feeding their families. Inclusive education therefore becomes an enterprise that is not only concerned with ensuring that OVC access education but it also becomes a process through which OVC social needs are met as a prerequisite to accessing education.

The findings relating to in-school feeding initiatives support literature which advances that school-feeding programs are a resilience-promoting structure for children who come from marginalised groups such as OVC (Wang & Fawzi, 2020). These authors argue that in-school feeding, including providing take-home packages increases school attendance and reduces drop-out rates in children from marginalised groups. Additionally, these authors argue that in-school feeding increases resilience in that it promotes participation in learning; a finding that is also highlighted in the excerpts given above.

### **8.3.3 The OVC Fund**

In addition to the school feeding program as a mechanism that the state utilizes to promote the inclusion of OVC, the OVC Fund was highlighted as another educational-structure through which the inclusion of OVC in education was enhanced. According to the findings of the study, the school head teachers collaborate with the Ministry of Education and Training and the Deputy Prime Minister's office to secure funds which will pay for OVC fees in schools. The findings revealed that the head teachers must be proactive in ensuring that they follow the requirements of the administrative process in order to have the government enlist and pay for OVC fees in school. The support which is offered to OVC through the head teachers' collaboration with the government is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*The government of Eswatini does support the OVC by paying R1, 400.00 per year towards OVC in school. The Head-teacher must register all the OVC and take the list to the DPM's office. This really does go a long way in ensuring that OVC are enrolled into the school at the beginning of every year (Guidance and Counselling Teacher C).*

While the amount paid by the state towards the education of OVC may not cover all the costs as mentioned in previous chapters, from the participant's articulations, it is clear that this amount enables OVC in high school to be at least registered at the beginning of the year. This form of support could create a basis on which OVC through their creativity and innovation (as mentioned in the previous chapter) could raise additional financial resources to enable their inclusion in education.

The findings articulated above reveal how financial structural resources offered by the state form part of resilience-enhancing components. This finding supports literature which avers that in a bid to ensure that OVC stay in school and complete their education, the government of the kingdom of Eswatini has established an OVC Fund which ensures that all registered OVC receive some financial support towards their education (EDSEC, 2011). From the findings, it is patent that OVC do receive some financial assistance from the state which enables their ability to remain in school. Although that may be, previous findings revealed that this financial resource is insufficient. As indicated, OVC were often sent home to collect additional fees and this incapacitated their resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general. Evidently, for resilience to be established, the resources offered should be consistent and sufficient. By offering a fraction of the required financial resources, OVC' ability to remain in school is compromised.

#### **8.3.4 Safety and Security**

The findings also uncovered that OVC welfare and inclusion into education were facilitated by the safety and security measures that the teachers put in place for children in school. While the core business in schools is to ensure that the pedagogic practices which promote academic development in children are well established and implemented, the study noted that teachers also paid significant attention to the environment in which learning took place. This is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*OVC are not safe. Their doors are broken at home, sometimes when they walk to school alone, then they go missing. Sometimes when they really need a child, especially now during the elections, they will come to the schools and find a way of getting the children*

*into their cars, drive them away bayobasontsa (for ritual murder). The albinos are really the ones they are looking for. So we now have a fence and the security guard here (Guidance and Counselling Teacher C).*

The above-given narration reveals the concept of schools as centres of care and support (EDSEC, 2011). From the participant's narration, it is evident that schools have extended their role as institutions of disseminating knowledge to those that focus on the environment in which learning takes place as well. The interest in the child as a 'whole' is articulated by Guidance and Counselling Teacher C. Having noted how schools have become spaces where predators kidnap vulnerable children for illicit practices in the community, the school provides resources that ensure that OVC are able to engage in the world of education without fear of being targeted for illegitimate activity. To add to the articulations given by the participant above, as I drove into the school premises to have an interview with Guidance and Counselling Teacher C, I noted that the school was surrounded by a high fence. I also had to fill in a form and answer a number of questions asked by the security guard at the gate. As I left the school premises, the security guard searched the vehicle I was in before finally allowing me to leave. From this exercise and from Guidance and Counselling Teacher C's report, it is evident that teachers pay close attention to the safety of all children including OVC. By putting various security protocols in place, OVC are made to feel safer within the school premises. OVC whose lives could have been in danger, are able to learn in a safe and inclusive environment.

The findings on how a safe and secure school environment enables resilience in children is supported by EDSEC (2011). EDSEC (2011) stipulates that the ability for children, especially OVC to remain in school, requires that the school environment be one that is protective and secure. As indicated by the findings, schools in Eswatini take significant measures to ensure that the learning environment is safe and secure for all children. As mentioned by UNESCO (1994), when schools establish a welcoming, safe and secure environment, inclusive education for vulnerable children will be propagated. Garmezy (1987) concludes that, when the local government, through the relevant ministries put systems in place which support OVC, they cushion the negative effects of the risks that these children may encounter. By providing resources which are protective factors to the vulnerable, the government enables OVC who would have otherwise developed negative outcomes to develop competencies that will enable their survival and the development of positive outcomes in an increasingly complex society (Garmezy, 1987).

#### **8.4 Social-oriented relationships**

In addition to the educational-based relationships, social relationships were also highlighted as trajectories that enabled OVC agency. The family and community at large were highlighted as social-oriented relational tools which enabled OVC resilience, wellbeing and inclusion into education. The study revealed that the relationships OVC had with their families and members of the community were at the heart of the relational agency which enabled OVC agency.

In the context of Eswatini, which is where the OVC who participated in this study live, it transpired that the relationships that OVC have with other people in the communities were grounded in Ubuntu, a philosophy that is prevalent in traditional societies in the sub-Saharan region (Etieyibo, 2017). It is for this reason that relational agency in this subsection will be discussed and analysed through the lens of Ubuntu. Ubuntu as defined in previous chapters refers to the relational support extended by the community to promote the general wellbeing of others in the community. It is an inclusive approach (Bolden, 2014), that centres on the premise that the livelihood of an individual is contingent on the support they receive from others around them. Relational agency in the context of Ubuntu, looks at how individuals are supported motivated and encouraged through norms and practice upheld in their own communities (Etieyibo, 2017). It focuses on the communal context and mutual responsibility as grounds on which individual agency and autonomy to facilitate their resilience, inclusion and wellbeing are premised.

While the concept of Ubuntu has been discussed in the previous section, it was situated in educational-oriented relationships. In this section Ubuntu is discussed as a communal phenomenon, one that is situated in the relationships that OVC have with others socially in their communities. In this section, Ubuntu speaks to how OVC are able to solicit support and how members of the family and of the community in which OVC live are able to offer support to them in ways that are grounded in humaneness, communalism and interdependence. It is about how OVC as individuals are defined in terms of humanity and interdependence with relatives, neighbours and other members of the community (Etieyibo, 2017). While in the previous section, Ubuntu was about teachers ‘choosing’ to perform acts of kindness towards OVC, in this context, Ubuntu is not about ‘choosing’ to support, but it is about ‘having’ to support OVC as they are not seen as a collection of individuals, but as deeply connected and inextricably linked to others in their society (Etieyibo, 2017). It speaks to how the relationships

that OVC have with others in their communities enable or fail to enable their agency, resilience and inclusion. These socially-based relationships are discussed below.

#### **8.4.1 Family-based networks**

The findings of the study revealed that OVC agency, resilience and general wellbeing were facilitated when members of the family provided OVC with shelter. According to the findings, when they lost a parent(s), rather than be taken into orphanages or foster homes, OVC were taken in by members of the extended family to reside and be under their care. This finding is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*When OVC parents die, their aunts and uncles take them into their homes. Some of them go and live with their grandparents. It is better that way. When they live with them they don't stay alone then (Learner Participant 25, questionnaire).*

Another participant highlighted that:

*Yes, I am an OVC. I lost my mother at a very tender age and had to stay with my grandmother and my aunties. The people I'm left with try to provide me with a conducive home and the love that I receive is overwhelming. The only thing they cannot help me with is tuition fees because they are jobless. Now I stay with my grandmother and my aunties. (Learner Participant 35, questionnaire)*

The findings given above show how acts of Ubuntu result in constructive influencing for OVC. From the articulations that *the love I receive is overwhelming*, it is evident that the actions of the members of her family towards her impact this participant positively. As she internalizes the positive acts of inclusion shown by her family members towards her, Learner Participant 35 externalizes emotions of gratitude, acceptance and contentment. While the findings in previous chapters revealed the risk aspect of relational agency whereby the relationships that OVC had with family members entailed destructive influencing such as sexual, emotional and physical abuse; the narration above reflects that some OVC were actually taken in by members of the family and their experiences were positive. According to these findings, OVC were provided with shelter and additional resources they needed by others within the family.

While in previous findings, it transpired that there was a significant lack of Ubuntu in the communities in which OVC lived, the findings articulated above reveal a contrasting viewpoint to that established by earlier findings. The findings in this instance support literature that

projects resilience as an Ubuntu-based phenomenon. It agrees with the assertions made by Schenk et al. (2008) who argue that, the duty of raising a child in communities of Ubuntu is not only the sole responsibility of the biological parents, but it is that of other members of the extended family as well. The acts of taking in and supporting children who have lost their parents as revealed by the findings also support Thwala (2013)'s argument that in the African context there is no child who can be referred to as an 'orphan'. According to Thwala (2013), when the extended family members take in OVC into their households, they embrace the values of humanness and responsibility which are in line with the principles of Ubuntu. While Thwala's assertions are supported in these findings, this study observes that the concept of Ubuntu as highlighted in previous findings is in itself not without contestations and ambiguity. In some instances, the communities in which OVC live show that they are grounded in the principles of Ubuntu while in other cases, the communities reflect non-compliance or even oblivion to this philosophy. Consequently, while it could be a resilience-enhancing tool which the community uses to support OVC, it is an inconsistent, controversial and situated pathway to enhancing resilience in OVC.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that extended family members often paid for OVC school fees, bought other school related supplies, and paid for OVC clothing and food. This finding is evidenced in the following excerpt:

*We are supported by my uncle who works for Shoprite in Siteki. He is the one who buys us food when it is month end. We always get some tinned fish and beans from him. Sometimes he sends the food through Phakama (a bus that often drives through the participant's area of residence). Sometimes he will buy our shoes or school jersey and send through Phakama if he can't come home (Learner Participant 31, message in a bottle).*

The afore except shows the interdependence that characterises relational agency. From the articulations made, it is evident that OVC ability to access school related resources and food rests on the support they receive from their uncle. It is through the uncle's acts of Ubuntu that these children are able to their wellbeing. Through the principles of concern and responsibility for others which are at the core of Ubuntu, OVC agency resilience and inclusion is facilitated. Evidently, having family members take responsibility for OVC could cushion the adverse encounters of marginalization which OVC reported experiencing in previous chapters. As stipulated by Hoffmann and Metz (2017), when OVC interact with others, they are able to

attain resources which can only be achieved as a result of that interaction. In this instance, the resources this participant receives are attained as a result of their interaction with the family.

The findings discussed above support literature which argues that the family is critical component of resilience in children. A plethora of literature (Turliuc et al.,2013, Katyal, 2015, Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017, Lara & Saracostti, 2019) avers that the family is the best resilient building resource a child can ever have. Katyal (2015) points out that generally, the family becomes a support system which provides OVC with the different resources they need to remain strong in their lives. From the findings, it is evident that because of family, OVC are able to attain the resources they need to remain in education. Lara and Saracostti (2019) believe that when members of the family are involved in the education of OVC, school retention and attendance is improved.

#### **8.4.2 Community-oriented networks**

In addition to the family as a structure that promoted resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing, the community was also perceived to be a tool through which OVC agency was promoted. While findings in previous chapters revealed that the community denied them access to communal resources needed for their livelihood, other findings contest these views. For instance, some members of the community were aware of the needs of OVC and took the initiative to put practices in place that would ensure that OVC are included both socially and educationally, and that they remain strong despite the challenges they encountered in their lives. By adopting the principle of Ubuntu which views “anyone’s child [as] everyone’s child” (Msengana, 2006, p. 102), the community through various ways enabled OVC to tap into resources needed to enhance their agency.

The findings relating to community-oriented networks revealed that OVC resilience, agency and inclusion was facilitated by the services offered by the community social workers. According to the findings, the community Chiefs (who are the head administrators in the traditional communities), often worked in collaboration with the members of the community to ensure the wellbeing and inclusion of OVC. It transpired that, the community got together and elected members who would work as volunteers to oversee the wellbeing of OVC. According to the participants, the Chiefs in collaboration with the government and other local and international organizations elected and trained local community members to be social workers who would ensure that OVC are taken care of. This view is captured in the following excerpt:

*My younger brother and sister are HIV positive. When my mother died, and they became sickly, Umgcugcuteli (the community social welfare worker) encouraged us to have them tested. She took us to the clinic and they tested positive to HIV. I have to make sure that they eat the food that the doctor said they must eat and that I always get their medicine and make sure that they drink it. Make McBride<sup>5</sup> (the community social worker) sometimes brings cooking oil or beans when the trucks come. But it's too much... Sometimes when they are sick, I have to take them to the clinic on Saturdays so, I cannot attend extra lessons on Saturdays. (Learner Participant 32, message in a bottle)*

The afore-given excerpt reveals how OVC are supported through the relationships they have with the members of the community. The services offered by the community social worker ensure that OVC access health care and the food they need to enable their wellbeing. While findings in previous chapters revealed how some members of the community withheld food supplies from OVC, in this instance, the social worker ensures that OVC receive their share of food when the food supplies donated to members of the community arrive. The social worker not only ensures that OVC are in good health, but she also sees to it that they are treated equitably. By ensuring that OVC receive their share of the resources, the social worker disrupts social injustice practices which often result in OVC marginalization and exclusion from society.

The findings also highlighted that, while some members of the community volunteered to be social workers, others offered their services at the community soup kitchen. According to the findings, the Chief in collaboration with the members of the community built soup kitchens which provided younger OVC, who are not in school, with food during the day. When asked how OVC were supported in their communities, Guidance and Counselling Teacher B stated that:

*We give our OVC food here at school. The younger OVC who remain at home are always fed in e Dladleni (Community Soup kitchens). They eat there and play there until their siblings collect them after school. The women who cook there also cook on Saturday so that even on Saturday the young ones have something to eat.*

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<sup>5</sup> Make McBride is a pseudonym. All other names used in this chapter are pseudonyms used to protect the identity of the participants.

The above articulations reveal how relational agency in communities of Ubuntu encapsulate communalism and concern for others. The articulations made above reveal how in communities of Ubuntu, agents concern themselves with the wellbeing of others; how as members of the community, they ensure that other members of the community, especially the most vulnerable like younger OVC are protected and supported. As mentioned in earlier sections, OVC are vulnerable to abductions where others kidnap them for illicit activities such as ritual murder, rape or child trafficking. When the community puts structures in place where younger OVC will be under the watchful eye of an adult, the risk to abduction is minimized. Furthermore, when communities offer food to younger OVC, older OVC who are heads of households could be relieved of the stress of worrying about where they would get the next meal to feed their siblings.

As the African saying goes; *Umuntu ngu muntu ngabantu*, “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am” (Mbiti, 1970, p. 141). When OVC are safe, fed and given a sense of belonging, they experience this because of the “we are” component of the relationships within their community. By partnering with members of their community, OVC are able to access the resources they need to remain strong and navigate the adverse circumstances they usually encounter in their lives. The concept of “we” which seems to be at the center of all relationships in these communities, creates a strong foundation on which the “I” in OVC can take responsibility for their progression in education and in life in general. From this analogy, the similarities between Ubuntu and relational agency are highlighted.

In addition to the community soup kitchens, the findings also revealed that the church-based relationships which OVC have with other members of the community were also brought up as another form of support which enabled OVC resilience, wellbeing and inclusion into education. The study unveiled that some OVC were able to remain in school because the church paid for their school fees. Other findings indicated that OVC often received food hampers every month while others had their rent and travel expenses to school paid for by the church. This is illustrated in the following excerpts:

*OVC here at school are mainly supported by the church. The church has donors from overseas who support the OVC in a number of ways. Some of the OVC here at school have their fees paid for by the church. Sometimes the church buys uniform, food and pays rent for the OVC. Other OVC live in the hostel here at school and the church pays*

*for that. Other OVC live across in the orphanage that the church has built for the OVC (Learner Participant 42, questionnaire).*

While Learner Participant 2 revealed that

*I go to Church every Sunday. Every Sunday after church the ladies there dish out some food for us they bring in their cars. They also give us bread for the week. When schools open, our pastor reminds the church that it is time to pay for our school fees and then they bring out baskets to take money for that. Sometimes they buy us lots of groceries and uniforms and shoes... I won't stop going to that church (Learner Participant 2, interviews).*

While in previous sections, the church was highlighted as a mechanism which supported OVC by providing emotional care, in this instance, the church is pinpointed as a relational tool through which OVC are able to access the physical resources they needed for their inclusion and wellbeing in general. From the articulations of the participants, it is patent that the church provides financial support which lessens the risk of OVC dropping out of school; provides accommodation which minimises OVC vulnerability to safety hazards, and buys food for OVC which cushions the negative effects of hunger.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that there are also cultural norms and practices within communities which promote resilience and provide OVC with a sense of belonging in their communities. From the findings of the study, it transpired that, in the event of death in a family, the members of the community often come to offer their condolences and make contributions towards the costs of the funeral. During this time of grief, the community also offers emotional support which enhances the feeling of belonging to those who are bereaved, including the children. This cultural practice is upheld by adults and children in the community. This finding is captured in the following excerpt:

*You know sometimes the children can be bad to some OVC. But our children still know who they are. When one of their own loses a parent, they will come up to you and remind you that money be donated for a child who has lost a parent...and they donate. Others also ask to go and help out at the homestead of the child who has lost a parent. They collect firewood, help with collecting water or even setting up the tent for the night vigil, just as their own parents do (Guidance and Counselling Teacher D).*

The above-mentioned discussion reveals that relational agency is multidimensional concept which is influenced by the cultural practices and norms within societies. From the narrative above, it is evident that relational agency takes the form and shape of the environment in which it operates. In this instance, it encapsulates the moral norms of generosity, compassion and concern for others which is the tradition followed by the community when tragedy befalls others. From the Guidance and Counselling Teacher's narration, it is evident that in the communities where OVC live, when a community member dies, the entire community gets together to mourn, comfort and support each other. The load and grief is shared by the entire community. When members of the community give financial, physical and emotional support during an OVC's bereavement, they relate to OVC in an Ubuntu-premised manner.

While the community in general gets together to support OVC, there were numerous findings that indicated that the neighbours in particular, played a significant role in supporting OVC. The study revealed that, in the absence of parental relationships that could provide the resources they needed, OVC benefitted from the acts of kindness, caring, generosity and compassion from their neighbours. According to the participants, some OVC were able to acquire school uniforms, food and help with taking care of their siblings or ailing parents through the relationships they had with their neighbours. This finding is evidenced in the following excerpts:

*Sometimes OVC get help from their neighbours. In my community, when there is an OVC nearby, the neighbours usually donate their children's clothing and old uniforms to OVC near them. They also give them food like a bag of maize at the end of the harvest season. Sometimes my mother also takes tinned-stuff and gives to OVC at the end of the month, (Learner Participant 29, questionnaire).*

Another participant added that:

*My mother is very sick. I have to bathe her and make sure I leave her with enough food and that she is ok until I come back from school. Sometimes when I am late, Make PP makhelwane wetfu (our neighbour) tells me to run to school and she then takes care of my mother. When things get bad at night, I go to her and she asks babe PP (pseudonym) to take my mother to the hospital. She helps me out a lot (Learner Participant 24 from the message in a bottle).*

The above excerpts reveal the cooperate concept in the philosophy of Ubuntu (Mbiti, 1989). From the articulations made by the participants, it is clear that neighbours see OVC not through the lens of individualism, but collectivism. As their neighbours, they are driven by sense of communalism where the problems that OVC have are not only theirs but are also a problem of others in the community. As noted by Letseka (2013), Ubuntu sees an individual problem not as an 'I' issue but as a 'we' situation that calls for all to work together to bring a solution.

The findings that the relationships that OVC have with their neighbours play a critical role in promoting their resilience and inclusion, challenges Lee's (2012) observation that OVC often feared that their neighbours would hurt them rather than protect them. In this instance, the neighbours are the first point of call for OVC. It is the neighbour who provides OVC with the resources they need, protects them and ensures that they are given the opportunity to access education. Through acts of Ubuntu, neighbours promote the inclusion rather than exclusion of OVC from education and from life in general.

The findings on how the numerous community-oriented networks enhance resilience in OVC support claims on the intricate relationship that exists between the environment and resilience. Ungar (2008) makes the claim that resilience is a context dependent phenomenon which is enhanced when communities offer culturally relevant pathways which OVC and others can utilise to ensure their wellbeing. From these findings, the position taken by social science authors such as Kumpulainen et al. (2018) who place a strong emphasis on the role of socio-cultural contexts, and see them as areas comprising of apparatuses which regulate human activities is supported. The different tools or artefacts which serve as resilient-building resources for OVC are clearly found within the environment and as Muhati-Nyakundi (2017) argues; when members of the community provide support to OVC, they promote a sense of belonging and identity which enables them to cope with the challenges that they face as a result of their state as OVC.

Furthermore, the findings that resilience is a community-oriented phenomenon contests literature that portrays resilience as a purely individual concept. While there is a shift towards seeing resilience through the social rather than the individual lens, authors like Oshio et al., (2003), Sinclair and Wallston (2004) maintain that resilience is an inborn trait. The findings as discussed in this section challenge this assertion. Rather than being a purely individualistic concept, the findings support Ungar (2013)'s view that resilience is a process through which the interaction of the individual and the environment/ community enables OVC to remain

strong in the face of adversity. Evidently, his assertion that “when we shape environments for our most vulnerable children, we make them more likely to overcome adversity and continue his/her normal development” (Ungar, 2014, p. 3) is upheld by the findings discussed in this section.

## **8.5 Summary**

The two sections in this chapter discussed how OVC were supported through the educational and communal relationships which they had with others in their environment. While the previous chapter highlighted that OVC are autonomous beings who are able to craft pathways that enable their resilience and inclusion, the findings in this chapter show that their agency is not in isolation. The findings reveal that when others offer resources, OVC are able to work alongside them as they strive to attain what is of importance to them at time.

From the findings, it is patent that at the centre of the relationships which facilitate resilience, inclusion and wellbeing for OVC is Ubuntu. It comes across that ubuntu-based relationships are the most effective form of relationships in supporting OVC. From the findings, it transpired that school-based relationships that were premised on the concept of Ubuntu were most effective in enabling resilience and inclusion for OVC. Also, the findings revealed that in their communities, OVC were able to experience inclusion and resilience when members of the community related to them in a manner that was based on the principles of Ubuntu.

Based on these findings, this study asserts that Ubuntu can play a significant role in promoting inclusion and resilience for OVC. This study proposes a new approach towards education which is ‘*Ubuntu-fying*’ education. ‘*Ubuntu-fying*’ education in this instance means adopting an educational approach that is based on the principles of Ubuntu as a way to support OVC inclusion in education. ‘*Ubuntu-fying*’ education could be an approach where teaching and learning for OVC is viewed through the lens of humanness. As an inclusive approach, this concept could premise teaching and learning for OVC on the values of communality, kindness, compassion, dignity, social justice and the principle that ‘umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ translated to “I am because we are, and since we are therefore I am” Mbiti, (1970). When teachers, school administrators and peers realise that OVC can achieve their educational goals through the support that they get from others, then education is ‘*Ubuntu-fied*’.

## 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the theme of relational agency as a feature of resilience and inclusion in education and into life in general for OVC. The findings as discussed in this chapter bring to the fore how OVC agency is situated in the relationships and networks that they have with other people in their communities.

The findings of interdependence as highlighted in the discussions has a bearing on how we conceptualize and define inclusive education for OVC. From the findings, it is evident that inclusive education for OVC is not about issues of disability nor is it about special educational needs. While UNESCO (1994) has extended the understanding of inclusive education to include issues of access whereby educational opportunities are provided to groups of marginalized children who may have had limited access in the past, this study adds that: for OVC, inclusive education is about how distributed skills, knowledge and expertise are pooled to generate a background for OVC agency to flourish. It is about establishing a framework within which the various structures oriented towards the education of children pool their resources and make them available to OVC so that OVC can utilize those resources as they navigate adversity in their lives. So for OVC, inclusive education is not only about them accessing education, but it is also about how the community in its entirety works together to enable OVC agency.

The above argument also has a bearing on how OVC as children are perceived in the communities in which they live. While the discussions in the previous chapter portrayed OVC as social beings who can transform their situations, the findings in this chapter show them as social actors whose agency is rooted in the relationships they have with other people in their communities. In this chapter, OVC come across as “beings and becomings” (Uprichard, 2007, p. 304). The state of ‘beings’ and ‘becomings’ as adopted by Uprichard (2007), argues that while OVC may have agency and be able to perform some of the activities that adults do (James & James, 2001), they still require support to enable them to perform those acts. The approach (beings and becomings) to viewing ‘child’/ ‘childhood’ for OVC enables the understanding that while they have agency and perform acts of responsibility that enable their resilience and inclusion, OVC are children whose agency is situated within the support of the environment. When the environment is not supportive, OVC cannot fully traverse the adversity they encounter in their daily lives.

The arguments as presented in this chapter are summed up by Edwards (2007) who concludes that, “our minds are formed by the ways of thinking and concepts in use that are available to us in our social worlds” (2007, p. 3). This view supports that what OVC do in their attempt to circumnavigate the adversity they experience in their daily lives is determined by what is made available to them in their communities. The way others think about them and act towards them enhances or suppresses their agency.

The chapter which follows provides conclusions and recommendations that the study makes in relation to the social experiences of OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education. It will establish and demonstrate how the questions asked by this study have been answered. It will also accentuate the new insights that this study offers.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 9.1 Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations that the study makes in relation to the social experiences of OVC and their inclusion or exclusion from education. It also discusses the limitations to this study and highlights the implications that the findings of this study have for further research on the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion/exclusion from education. In addition, this chapter establishes and demonstrates how the questions asked by this study have been answered and how the findings contribute to existing knowledge. Before I provide the conclusions and recommendations, I briefly summarise the previous chapters.

In the first Chapter, I provided a contextualization for the study. I introduced the topic of inclusion and exclusion of OVC in education. I also provided the context in which the study takes place and highlighted the rationale, objectives and the research questions. Chapter 2 was a discussion of the literature which relates to the phenomenon investigated by this study. In this Chapter, I presented a discussion of the literature which pertains to the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. The key concepts and how they frame this study were discussed. Thereafter, in Chapter 3, I provided the theoretical framework within which this study is situated. In this Chapter, the theory of resilience, as the framework which supports this study, was discussed extensively. In Chapter 4, I described the research design, methods and processes which were utilized in collecting data for the study. In this Chapter, I also highlighted the ethical concerns and what was done to undertake a carefully considered study that abided by ethical principles. In Chapter 5, the demographics of the participants to the study were brought to the fore. Information relating to the living arrangements for OVC and the levels of education for the teacher participants were highlighted. In Chapter 6, I presented, analysed and discussed the theme of Adversity. This Chapter brought to the fore the social experiences which relate to the risks, hardships and challenges that OVC encountered in their daily lives. In Chapter 7, I presented, analysed and discussed the theme of Responsible Agency. In this Chapter, I highlighted how OVC participated in and contributed to shaping their experiences. Chapter 8 was a presentation, analysis and discussion of the

relationships which promoted agency in OVC. Through the theme of Relational Agency, the experiences of OVC with regards to the support that they receive through the relationships that they have with others were highlighted. These three chapters (6, 7, and 8) taken together presented data on the social experiences that OVC encounter in their daily lives and analysed these data in relation to OVC's inclusion or exclusion from education and from life in general.

## **9.2 A summary of the key findings of the study**

This thesis began with the objective of investigating the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. It aimed at answering the main question which was: How do the lived social experiences of OVC in Eswatini indicate their inclusion in, or exclusion from, education? The summary of the key findings will be discussed based on the sub-questions which are:

1. What are the OVC's reported everyday social experiences?
2. How do OVC cope with the social experiences that pertain to their inclusion or exclusion generally?
3. In what ways (if any) do the social experiences of OVC influence their education?
4. What kinds of social and instructional support structures are available to OVC and how do these promote or fail to promote the inclusion of OVC in education?
5. How did OVC (and others) suggest that current support structures in school and in the community be improved as a strategy for ameliorating OVC vulnerabilities?

### **9.2.1 What are the OVC's reported everyday social experiences?**

The study revealed that the everyday social experiences of OVC are characterised by a dialectical nature of adversity-agency. From these findings, it transpired that the social experiences whereby OVC exhibit agency and experience adversity led to them encountering conflicting experiences of inclusion and exclusion in education and in life in general.

The data revealed that OVC experienced numerous encounters of adversity. These include experiences of rejection by their family when they lost one or more parents, destitution, abuse, and marginalization by others in society. While that may be the case, the study also unveiled that these experiences do not always result in OVC exclusion from education and from life in general. Some of the findings revealed that other OVC are able to adapt and even become stronger in the midst of adverse situations. This is demonstrated by some participants who

when they become OVC, they learn to balance the workloads they have at school and at home. They develop strategies that enable them to take care of their siblings, do the household chores and complete homework given to them by their teachers. They were able to experience inclusion in education and in life regardless of the 'at risk' category under which OVC are usually classified (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017). Based on these findings, I argue that OVC experiences are characterised by a binary relationship of inclusion-exclusion whereby, while OVC encounter experiences of adversity, through agency and autonomy, they can navigate those challenges such that they access education and wellbeing in general.

### **9.2.2. How do OVC cope with the social experiences that pertain to their inclusion or exclusion generally?**

The findings revealed that OVC were able to cope with the social experiences of inclusion or exclusion through various forms of agency which interacted in their lives. From the findings, it transpired that at the core of how OVC coped with their social experiences was the interaction between responsible agency and relational agency. The findings highlighted that the binary relationship between these forms of agency enabled OVC resilience and in that way their inclusion into education and into life in general was facilitated.

From the findings, the study takes the stance that OVC ability to cope with their social experiences is a multidimensional phenomenon. While OVC are autonomous beings and have been argued to be social actors who actively work to turn their situations around (Uprichard, 2007), their agency is a situated phenomenon. The environment which comprises of other people and the relationships they have with OVC, situate OVC autonomy. The manner in which the environment responds to OVC determines how OVC cope or fail to cope with their social experiences with regards to their inclusion or exclusion to education. This study therefore advances that inclusive education for OVC is a situated concept. It is grounded in the actions taken by others towards OVC and also by how OVC respond to those actions. This study puts it to the fore that while OVC can perform acts that facilitate their inclusion into education, it is through the relationships they have with others that inclusive education for them is accomplished. Inclusive education therefore for OVC is facilitated by the binary relationship of responsible agency (which is about how OVC take charge of their inclusion) and relational agency (which entails how the relationships that OVC have with others support their inclusion into education).

### **9.2.3 In what ways (if any) do the social experiences of OVC influence their education?**

The findings revealed that the binary social experiences of adversity and support which characterised OVC livelihood, had a dual impact on their education. From the findings, it transpired that experiences characterised by agency whereby OVC performed acts of autonomy and responsibility, and when others offered them the resources they need, enabled OVC to experience inclusion into education. Conversely, when OVC experienced adversity as a result of the lack of support from others and unavailability of the resources needed, they experienced exclusion from education.

Based on the findings given above, this study agrees with the argument that inclusive education is a social construct (Armstrong et al., 2011). This study concurs that, rather than what is happening within the child, it is what happens in the environment that determines inclusive education. The study argues that inclusive education for OVC is contingent on what happens in the environment. Be it the community or family, it is what happens in these social spaces that determine the inclusion or exclusion of OVC from education. Based on the afore-given views, this study hypothesises that inclusive education is characterised by the notion of interdependence where what happens in the social world has significant bearing on the experiences of OVC in their educational worlds. It involves the social experiences that children encounter in their daily lives as determining factors of their inclusion/exclusion from education. Inclusive education therefore is not a concept restricted to access and participation (UNESCO,1994), nor is it only confined to diversity and how schools respond to difference in all children (Armstrong et al., 2011). I also encompass the social experiences that OVC encounter as a factor that has significant bearing on how they experience inclusion or exclusion from education. This view implies a radical shift from paradigms that see the school and the community as separate worlds in which OVC live. Rather, this view promotes the idea of seeing schools as an extension of the community. In this instance, inclusive education is about how schools collaborate with the local community and how as units situated within communities, schools bring in the culture, traditions and experiences of OVC from their communities and utilise them as building blocks for inclusive education.

#### **9.2.4 What kinds of social and instructional support structures are available to OVC and how do these promote or fail to promote the inclusion of OVC in education?**

The study revealed that the interaction between educationally-oriented and socially-based structures led to the binary relationship of OVC inclusion/exclusion from education. As mentioned in previous chapters, while OVC experienced adverse instances such as the lack of food, inability to purchase school required items, abuse, health and hygiene related problems; they also experienced support from teachers, family members and the community in general. From those around them, OVC were able to access resources like shelter, food, skills and knowledge that enabled their inclusion to education. From these findings, the study made the observation that when the structures within the school or community were premised on relationships that encompassed the principles of Ubuntu, OVC inclusion was expedited. Conversely, when the structures and relationships that OVC had with others were not situated within Ubuntu, OVC exclusion from education and from life in general was propagated.

From the findings, this study argues that inclusive education for OVC in traditional communities is an Ubuntu-oriented phenomenon. It is a process through which access and participation into education is governed by the principles of humaneness, caring and sharing which are at the core of Ubuntu (Etieyibo, 2017). It is a phenomenon through which all structures and relationships that are oriented towards the education of OVC, see OVC not as individuals, but as beings that are connected to the communities in which they live (Letseka, 2013). Clearly, inclusive education in this context is about interdependence. It is about acknowledging that OVC are social co-dependent beings (Letseka, 2013) whose resilience and inclusion into education depends on structures and relationships that are built on respect for others, kindness, freedom, dignity and care (Etieyibo, 2017; Hoffman & Metz, 2017 & Letseka, 2013).

#### **9.2.5 How did OVC (and others) suggest that current support structures in school and in the community be improved as a strategy for ameliorating OVC vulnerabilities?**

The findings revealed contradicting views on how OVC and others believed that the existing structures be improved such that OVC inclusion and general wellbeing be enhanced. While some were of the view that the state should take full responsibility for the inclusion and wellbeing of OVC, others believed that OVC should take more responsibility for their inclusion and general wellbeing. These perceptions clearly show that others who do not experience the world in the way that OVC do, see OVC differently. They do not see OVC as those who need

to be taken care of and be afforded the resources they need to enable their wellbeing. Others seem to be of the view that as children from marginalised groups, OVC are not entitled to and should not readily receive the resources they need to be in school and to access life in general. Rather, some expect them to seek casual employment from others, look for scholarships and start small businesses like selling sweets or vegetables when they are not in school. Although this view creates a framework for OVC resilience and opportunity to grow in the midst of adversity, it also places them at risk of encountering further adversity and eventual exclusion from education and life in general. Based on these findings, this study puts it across that, while OVC were seen as active agents who can underwrite their inclusion, they should not be expected to perform this agency in isolation.

Based on the afore-given arguments, this study defines OVC as interdependent beings (Hoffmann & Metz, 2017), whose resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing is facilitated not only by their ability to perform acts of responsibility, but also by the resources others offer them as they navigate the adverse circumstances in which they often live. Adopting the approach given above brings to the fore how the binary relationship of responsible agency and relational agency stimulate OVC agency, resilience and inclusion into education and life generally. Additionally, this definition brings to light the effectiveness of interlinking support systems and structures as a way forward in ensuring OVC resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing.

### **9.3 Contributions to existing body of knowledge**

While there is ample knowledge on the experiences of OVC with regards to their education (as mentioned in previous chapters), there is a dearth of knowledge on the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. This study therefore offers new insights which contribute to the existing body of knowledge on OVC social experiences with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. Based on these experiences, the major contribution that this study makes to existing knowledge is that of putting forward the concept of inclusive agency.

Inclusive agency as a newly founded concept in this study is defined as an approach whereby individual, structural and relational processes operate in unison to support OVC agency, resilience and inclusion into education and into life in general. It is a multidimensional approach whereby structures and processes that are geared towards ensuring the inclusion of

OVC are interconnected such that they work collaboratively to elicit agency, resilience and inclusion to education and to life in general for OVC. It speaks to the ability of OVC to utilise responsible and relational agency as tools through which they navigate adversity. Inclusive agency therefore is about the interlinking of different forms of agency-eliciting inclusive education processes and how they work together to promote inclusion for OVC. It speaks to how inclusive education processes collectively stimulate the capacity for others and for OVC themselves, to make deliberate decisions and act on those decisions such that OVC experience inclusion rather than exclusion from education. It can be seen as the framework through which inclusive education for OVC is enabled. As a concept, it holds the spokes of inclusive education agency-eliciting processes together such that they are more effective in promoting inclusive education for OVC.

Furthermore, this study makes the contribution that OVC are conceptualised as young people who have to negotiate their social experiences without the support of their parents. That is, there is little or no cushioning mitigating their social experiences by parents and as a result, what OVC experience outside the learning environment impacts their education directly. The findings reveal that when OVC encounter adverse social experiences, their resilience and inclusion into education is negatively impacted. The hardships and challenges that OVC often encounter as a result of the lack of familial support often leads to their exclusion from education. This study therefore proposes that; whatever practitioners and policy makers do with regards to the implementation of inclusive education for OVC, the starting point is in understanding that what OVC experience outside the learning scenario will have an impact on their ability to learn. Inclusive education structures meant to support OVC education should therefore incorporate the social domain as the background on which OVC educational inclusion or exclusion rests. These structures should aim at stimulating agency in the social domains such that OVC are included in education. Inclusive education in this instance should be viewed as a process through which educational structures are modified and made flexible such that they take into account the social experiences of OVC and how these experiences may hinder or promote their progression in education. It becomes a process through which inclusive educational structures and processes are geared towards stimulating intention and action that will promote OVC inclusion in education and generally.

The study also contributes to literature by examining OVC resilience and agency with regards to their inclusion in education while at the same time highlighting their vulnerability and needs. This study presents a balanced approach whereby OVC experiences are grounded in resilience

as the framework, however this has not been done at the expense of ignoring the real life situations of adversity and vulnerability that cloud OVC everyday life. The analyses reveal how OVC, as agents of transformation work in joint action with others to create pathways that promote their inclusion into education. Yet the study foregrounds rather than minimizes the challenges they encounter. In so doing, this study raises awareness of both how OVC exercise agency, and that their agency is often characterized by significant strife which sometimes has personal costs for OVC.

Additionally, the findings indicate that OVC resilience and inclusion into education rests on critical components, namely; responsibility and social relationships. While some authors (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017; Rutter, 2012; Werner & Smith, 1989), speak of protective factors such as internal traits and external factors as critical components of resilience, I argue that a comprehensive approach which comprises of the acts of responsibility that OVC perform to and the resources that others provide through the relationships of Ubuntu are critical for OVC resilience and inclusion in education. I also argue that the concept of ‘performing’ resilience which is embedded in responsible agency, is a more propitious approach which advances that resilience is not a biological trait, and for that reason, OVC and those with whom they interact can be taught how they can facilitate the performance of acts of resilience which will enhance OVC inclusion in education and generally. Evidently, facilitating their inclusion into education and life generally is not only the responsibility of OVC, but that of practitioners and policy makers as well. As a result, through the component of Ubuntu socially-oriented relationships, practitioners and policy makers can gain an understanding of how relationships can be harnessed as trajectories that can be incorporated into the educational set-up so that OVC are better supported.

Based on the afore-given discussion, I argue that holding a view that agency is linked to biological traits creates a perception that other OVC do not have it in their genetic makeup to be strong. It promotes the notion that some OVC are not biologically wired with the traits needed to be able to navigate risk and adversity and as a result they are destined for failure in life. Therefore, through the idea of ‘performing’ resilience, this study contests the views that some OVC will inevitably succumb to adversity as they do not have it within them to attain an education or a life that other children have in society. Evidently, rather than advancing the pathological lens that the ability for children including OVC is embedded in their biological make-up, this is an approach which promotes the view that while OVC may be children from marginalised groups which are seen through the ‘at-risk’ lens (Muhati-Nyakundi, 2017), they

can succeed in their education and life in general. Furthermore, ‘performing’ resilience emphasises that this is not an act which can or should be undertaken in isolation. This contribution has a bearing on how practitioners can teach OVC to be strong and how they can navigate the adverse circumstances in their daily lives.

The study also makes the contribution that; in as much as OVC are aware of their exclusion from education, they also have the know-how on how they can be better supported such that they are included in education. The concept of responsible agency brings forth OVC autonomy with regards to ensuring their inclusion in education and in life in general. The creativity and innovation they display as they navigate the challenges they encounter, shows that practitioners and policy makers can learn how to support OVC better from OVC themselves. Learning from OVC themselves means that practitioners and policy makers could create more effective support structures. By giving OVC the opportunity to bring in their knowledge, skills and culture into the learning environment, practitioners and policy makers could harness OVC knowledge and skills and create trajectories that are more familiar to, and therefore more effective and efficient for, OVC inclusion.

#### **9.4 Recommendations**

The study notes how structures and processes that relate to the inclusion of OVC work in isolation and independently of each other and how this detachment weakens the effectiveness they could have in promoting OVC resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general. For instance, while the state took into consideration the adverse experiences of OVC, especially children from child-headed families with regards to hunger and ensured that OVC received at least one meal from school (EDSEC, 2011), there was no feeding provided for them by the state when they got back home. This translated to some OVC arriving to school hungry and sleeping in class as a result of not having had anything to eat from home. Also, while the state ensured that OVC are safe at school, by erecting fencing and having schools employ a security guard to ensure their safety (EDSEC, 2011), the houses in which OVC lived were dilapidated, windows were broken and doors did not lock. OVC have reported incidences of sexual abuse, where because of the state of their housing, predators walked in and sexually abused them (as indicated by Learner Participant 43, message in a bottle). From these findings, it is clear that when structures and processes that relate to OVC inclusion in education work individualistically, they tend to promote adversity, marginalisation and exclusion for OVC. In the absence of a structure that brings inclusive education processes together such that they

operate in unison, OVC marginalisation and exclusion rather than inclusion is propagated. The proposition that this study makes is that OVC resilience and inclusion into education and into life in general is enhanced by a multifaceted rather than a linear approach towards inclusive education. Their ability to achieve the goals they set for themselves educationally and generally, are achieved when inclusive education structures and processes work collectively as mechanisms geared towards the inclusion of OVC. This therefore makes recommendations based on how a multi-faceted structural approach could facilitate resilience and inclusion for OVC.

Based on the realities revealed by the findings, I propose that a review on the policies and practices relating to OVC inclusion and general wellbeing. From the findings that structures worked independently, this study noted that there were no checks and balances to hold those in power accountable. The findings highlighted that some of these structures were characterised by corruption whereby those entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring support for OVC actually withheld the resources that OVC needed for their inclusion. As the study highlighted, head teachers often removed OVC from the list of grant recipients and put children who were not OVC as beneficiaries. The findings also revealed that some OVC were denied admission into the schools of their choice because they were OVC. Furthermore, the findings revealed that food meant to be given to OVC was often distributed to other people in the communities in which OVC lived. From these findings, it is evident that each inclusive education agency-eliciting process operates independently and this has a negative effect on OVC resilience and inclusion. To ameliorate this, this study recommends a shift from individualistic-centred approaches where structures operate as separate units to a multifaceted-structural approach whereby the multiple structures that see to the inclusion of OVC, are interconnected. Having this multi-dimensional structure highlights how through relational agency (as discussed in preceding chapters) professionals work collaboratively as they distribute the resources needed by OVC for their inclusion. A multidimensional approach means that the distribution of resources for OVC will not be left in the hands of an individual but to a group of people who might be able to hold each other accountable should issues of corruption emerge. For example, if the inclusion of OVC to the list of beneficiaries was done by a committee that comprised of the head teacher, teachers and some members of the community who perhaps serve on the school committee, rather than it being left solely to the discretion of the head teacher, there could be fairness in this process. Also because members of the community could be more aware of the family dynamics in the lives of OVC, their presence in such a committee could ensure

that OVC who experience significant lack of familial support are included on the list of beneficiaries.

The study also recommends that school fees and other educational costs be fully borne by the state with the support of other international organisations which have been highlighted as agencies that support education for OVC. As indicated by the findings, other school administrative costs were borne by the school. This means that the administrative costs for running the school were actually paid for by the learners, including OVC. The findings revealed that, while the state contributes to the education of OVC education through grants, the amount sent to schools for OVC tuition often did not cover all the necessary costs and this resulted in OVC being sent home. It is clear that the grants are insufficient as also noted by Word Bank (2021). Clearly, offering grants to OVC and having them turned away from school to find money to top-up is in itself exclusion. It brings to the fore Graham and Slee (2005)'s view that "inclusion and exclusion are interrelated processes and their interplay constantly creates new inclusive/exclusion possibilities (p. 36). To avoid creating the possibilities for exclusion, this study recommends that the state carries the administrative costs in schools. The payment of school utility bills such as water and electricity, salaries for the school secretary, cook or security guard could also be overseen by the government so that OVC do not encounter experiences of being turned away from school to collect top-up fees which the schools need for the administration of school.

Furthermore, this study recommends a shift from the status quo with regards to the relationships that teachers have with their students in schools. The findings to this study highlighted how OVC inclusion and wellbeing depended significantly on the relationships they had with their teachers at school, especially the Guidance and Counselling teachers. From the findings of the study, it transpired that while some OVC were able to utilize the relationships they had with their teachers for inclusion, in other instances, the teachers were their source of marginalisation and exclusion. This study recommends that practitioners see the relationships they have with their learners as an inclusive mechanism or inclusive education process through which OVC agency can be elicited. Framing teaching and learning processes within relational agency could promote OVC resilience and inclusion more effectively. As highlighted by McLaughlin et al. (2017), relationships that are supportive and affirmative towards children create a foundation which enables children (including OVC) to experience a sense of value, belonging and safety. Evidently, relational agency within teaching and learning promotes OVC resilience and inclusion.

This study also makes recommendations in the area of guidance and counselling in schools. While guidance and counselling in schools is not a new phenomenon in Eswatini, it is evident from the findings that this area needs to be revisited so that it aligns with the mandates of inclusive education. The findings of the study revealed that the number of Guidance and Counselling teachers is not sufficient to support the significantly high numbers of OVC in school. The findings of this study support the claim made by EDSEC (2011) that the effects of HIV/AIDS have led to a significant increase in the number of OVC in Eswatini. Considering this continuous rise in the number of OVC, guidance and counselling in schools becomes even more critical as an inclusive education process that elicits agency, resilience and inclusion for OVC. From the observation that more children seem to fall under the category of OVC and require support from the Guidance and Counselling teachers, this study calls for more Guidance and Counselling teachers to be appointed in schools to ensure that there are more teachers to support OVC who need guidance and counselling. Furthermore, it was also revealed that the Guidance and Counselling teachers were also expected to teach additional subjects as part of their responsibilities in schools. This results in Guidance and Counselling teachers failing to support OVC adequately (Sibandze & Mafumbate, 2019). Based on the afore-given arguments, it is evident that having teaching responsibilities other than guidance and counselling means that the teachers might not be available to the learners when the need arises. It is for this reason that I suggest that as a starting point, Guidance and Counselling teachers have reduced loads so that they are able to offer more time to supporting OVC.

In addition to the heavy loads and high numbers of OVC that Guidance and Counselling teachers have to support in schools, the study also revealed that the Guidance and Counselling teachers lacked the necessary skills and knowledge needed to support OVC. From the findings relating to the demographics of the teacher participants, it transpired that none was trained on guidance and counselling yet the role that Guidance and Counselling teachers play in the support of OVC in schools is critical (EDSEC, 2011). Guidance and counselling assists learners with decision making; it helps them develop skills and knowledge that will enable them to find resolutions to their problems (Alavi et al., 2012). The lack of necessary skills and knowledge in Guidance and Counselling teachers to support OVC therefore inhibits the stimulation of their agency. It is for this reason that this study recommends that the state collaborates with teacher training institutions and have Guidance and Counselling be offered as a core module in teacher training institutions in the country. The introduction of guidance and counselling as a core module in all teacher training institutions could be beneficial in two ways. Firstly, as Dhal

(2017) proposes, guidance and counselling are integral parts of education. While the National Education and Training Sector Policy (2018) stipulates how the Ministry aims at supporting guidance and counselling, it makes no mention of introducing guidance and counselling as a compulsory module to all preservice teachers in Eswatini. Introducing guidance and counselling as a core module would mean that every teacher is actually trained on these components. By having all teachers trained in guidance and counselling, the responsibility of providing guidance and counselling is shared by all rather than ‘some’ teachers in the school. Also, by having guidance and counselling introduced as a core module, it means that all preservice teachers acquire the necessary skills and knowledge needed to provide guidance and counselling to learners. Conversely, as teachers, they will be in a position to offer some of the support needed by OVC to remain resilient and included in education.

The findings of the study also indicated that OVC can contribute to their inclusion in education and to their wellbeing in general. As part of enhancing their inclusion, OVC as stakeholders should be engaged in promoting their inclusion. From the findings of the study, it transpired that some OVC can perform acts of entrepreneurship which enable their resilience. By engaging in businesses like the dagga trade and by selling vegetables and other items during the weekends and when on holiday, these OVC were able to sustain their wellbeing and inclusion in education. This study envisions that a multifaceted structure whereby individual, structural and relational agencies operate in unison could support OVC autonomy and enhance their resilience, inclusion and wellbeing. This multifaceted structure which would comprise of representatives from the different agency eliciting structures in the community could come together and work in unison to promote OVC agency, resilience and inclusion. Representatives from the faith-based organisations, NGOs, the government, the community at large and OVC themselves could come together to create business opportunities in which OVC can engage. The knowledge and skills that they have (as highlighted by the findings) indicate that given an opportunity to engage in business ventures that will enable their wellbeing, OVC agency could be facilitated. It is this shift from viewing inclusive education as an approach that meets the needs of all learners regardless of their differences (EDSEC, 2011), to an approach that sees it as a process through which inclusive education structures work jointly to elicit agency, resilience and general wellbeing in all children, that will enable the inclusion of OVC.

This study also recommends an ideological shift in what education in Eswatini should prioritise. It makes the suggestion that education be viewed through the lens of responsible agency whereby teaching and learning is geared towards stimulating all children’s (including

OVC) ability to make decisions about their lives and act on those decisions to achieve the desired outcome. This means that teaching should be geared foremost to teaching children to perform deliberate acts of responsibility that could enable them to experience resilience, inclusion and well-being even if they encounter hardship in their worlds. This view calls for the modifications of the curriculum such that education prioritises social justice and learner autonomy in conjunction with academic knowledge. From the findings of the study, it is evident that while there is a Guidance and Counselling period which aims to impart skills and knowledge that could enable autonomy; this period is utilised to make up for lost time in other subjects or to give “important” subjects more time on the timetable. It is clear that Eswatini, like other former Western European colonies, has its education system grounded in a colonial curriculum that constitutes the voice of the dominant which demarcated status and power (Shizba, 2013). It is grounded in a neo-liberal framework and the values of competitive individualism (Slee, 2011). A decolonization of the curriculum such that schooling aims at promoting social justice and learner autonomy, could facilitate the acquisition of skills and knowledge OVC need for resilience and transformation. As Slee (2011) proposes, the success of inclusive education lies in the questioning of the neo-liberal education model. It rests on transforming the curriculum from one that increases social division, inequality and elitism to one which empowers the marginalised to liberate themselves from oppressive situations (Perry, 2009). This study calls for an all-encompassing approach whereby the Ministry of Education and Training works closely with the regional education inspectors, the leadership of the school and the teachers to ensure that the Guidance and Counselling period is utilized solely for providing support to learners, especially OVC. Also, this study suggests that the Ministry of Education and Training works in collaboration with the National Curriculum Centre (NCC) - which is an establishment responsible for designing the curriculum- and the teachers, as well as OVC themselves, to come up with ways in which skills and knowledge that could enhance OVC resilience and autonomy be incorporated in all subject areas so that there are multiple trajectories through which OVC acquire knowledge to enable them to be democratic citizens within their communities. After all, OVC have the experiential knowledge on how they are excluded, the teachers are the ones to deliver the content to the students and NCC is responsible for designing the curriculum. When these different constituents come together to work on how best to incorporate skills and knowledge to support OVC resilience and inclusion, inclusive education for OVC could be facilitated.

Although this study recommends a modification of the curriculum such that it is democratic and enables democratic citizenship for OVC, it also notes the conflicting and competing viewpoints pertaining to a democratic education (Biesta, 2009). As Perry (2009) notes, different countries will adopt different approaches to democratic education based on unique historical and traditional contexts. For this reason, this study proposes that Eswatini adopts an Ubuntu-based approach as a foundation that will enable interconnectedness, trust and unity (Perry, 2009) in working towards the goal of achieving inclusive education as a democratic form of education. Like most sub-Saharan communities which are grounded in the principles of Ubuntu (Letseka, 2016), Eswatini could frame its pedagogical processes including the modification of the curriculum on the principles of Ubuntu. Since an approach that espouses a philosophy of respect, care, responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing of others (Bolden, 2014) is more familiar to the community of Eswatini, it could be more effective in ensuring the success of inclusive education.

The findings also brought to the fore how collaboration and teamwork were critical parts of inclusive agency. From these findings, this study asserts that at the centre of inclusive education, is collaboration and teamwork. It is clear that support for OVC is not an individual enterprise, but one that is distributed across constituents (as discussed in the previous chapter). For this reason, this study recommends that collaboration across professionals in different spaces that are geared to support OVC, be adopted as a statutory practice which all schools embrace. As the findings projected, when professionals get together to share their skills and knowledge, a wider pool of resources that could enhance OVC inclusion and general wellbeing, is created. Clearly, when there is collaboration and teamwork amongst professionals who are oriented towards the education of children including OVC; OVC resilience and inclusion into education is facilitated (Pantic & Florian, 2015).

The findings of the study also brought to the fore the concept of the 'family' as an inclusive education structure which stimulated OVC agency, resilience and inclusion. From the findings of the study, it is apparent that although traditional structures such as the extended family and the role it plays in ensuring resilience, inclusion and general wellbeing in OVC, is weakening (Letseka, 2013) it still is among the effective agency-eliciting inclusive education processes in the kingdom of Eswatini. As mentioned in previous chapters, while the practice of taking in OVC by other members of the extended family has been part of the cultural practices and expectations in communities of Eswatini, the current situation of increased poverty levels has led to a decline in this practice (Dlamini, 2020). It is evident that this Ubuntu-based structure

needs to be supported if it is to remain an agency-eliciting inclusive education structure for OVC. As part of strengthening this process, the State could provide additional resources to families who have taken in OVC. Since Eswatini relies more on subsistence farming for sustenance (Dhemba, 2018), families that take in OVC or child-headed households could have their land cultivated by the Ministry of Agriculture for free and also the state could provide these families with seed, fertilizer and other resources needed for cultivating their lands. As highlighted by Evans (2012), the broader availability of land in rural areas offers children from marginalized groups an opportunity to access food and also make a living from selling produce from the land to which they usually have access. The findings in this study revealed that a significant number of OVC who were participants dwelled in rural areas and this means that they could have access to land. By providing the resources needed to grow food, these OVC or the extended family members who take them in could access the resources they need to grow food that will support OVC livelihood.

In addition, to supplying families who take in OVC under their care with farming resources to enable the production of food items, the study also suggests that the state give those families a foster allowance which will enable them to take care of other needs that OVC may have. While the provision of farming resources would enable OVC access to food, the allowance could enable those who take OVC under their guardianship to provide them with other needed resources such as transportation fees, money to access health care or pay for other additional costs in school. In Namibia, foster families are afforded an allowance of two hundred Namibian Dollars for the first child and a hundred Namibian Dollars for subsequent children taken in by foster families (The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare in Namibia, 2009). The provision of such an allowance could go a long way in supporting families who take in OVC under their guardianship. As indicated by the study, families often turned OVC away because they were perceived to be an extra financial burden to others. This study pre-supposes that if they receive financial support from the state, these families may be encouraged to take in OVC under their care.

In addition to foster families receiving a monthly allowance, this study recommends that the state gives OVC direct cash transfers in the form of monthly stipend to enable them to access resources such as toiletries, clothes and other learning material needed at school. While there has been a piloting exercise for OVC cash transfer, this exercise was only on a piloting basis and managed to support only six percent of the one hundred and eighty-one thousand orphans in Eswatini (UNICEF 2017). According to UNICEF (2017), OVC who were part of this cash

transfer piloting exercise were able to access school uniforms, health and nutritional resources and also buy food. Based on this argument, it is clear that this strategy could be one of the most effective trajectories in enabling OVC resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general.

## **9.5 Implications**

While the findings have offered some valuable insights into the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education, these insights could stimulate further research in this area. This subsection therefore presents the implications of this study for further research and practice.

### **9.5.1. Implications for policy and practice**

The findings as brought forth by the participants reveal that there seems to be a general lack of awareness on how OVC inclusion or exclusion hinges on social components such as the relationships they have with others. This lack of focus on relational agency as a factor that contributes to the inclusion/exclusion seems to perpetuate OVC exclusion. The implication is that the concept of relational agency be incorporated into policies and practices that relate to OVC wellbeing and inclusion in education. The process of teaching and learning could be based on relational agency as a foundation for OVC inclusion in education. Unlike other forms of teaching and learning such as collaborative teaching or cooperative learning which involves educators working as a team to support learners (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), relational agency goes beyond supporting learners academically. It is about situating teaching and learning within relationships as a supportive mechanism for the academic and social wellbeing of OVC. It also involves collaboration between professionals not only within the same profession, but across disciplines and agencies that are oriented towards supporting the inclusion of all children including OVC. Evidently, policies need to redefine the conceptualisations of inclusive education they are based. Rather than viewing inclusive practices as what teachers do in school to ensure the inclusion of all children (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011), inclusive practices could be conceptualised as those actions whereby teachers work collaborative with each other and with other professionals from other sectors within the community to ensure the inclusion of OVC in education. incorporating relational agency into policy and practice could enable educational professionals such as teachers to understand that having positive relationships with their learners could enhance OVC inclusion and general wellbeing.

The study also revealed that OVC adversity and exclusion was exacerbated by the lack of familial support to ensure that they access the resources they needed for their livelihood. According to the findings, OVC often had no one to provide them with the necessary support needed for their schooling and wellbeing in general. As mentioned earlier, this calls for a multifaceted structure to oversee the wellbeing of OVC. This structure could include some responsibility for the guardianship of OVC whereby the state takes responsibility for all and not some of the needs that OVC have. It is through this structure that provision for adequate housing, payment for all their schooling expenses and being given a monthly stipend that could enable them to buy food and toiletries could be put in place for OVC. This implies that policies need to re-examine how they define OVC and the relationship between OVC and structural arrangements. This study notes with concern how the current education and training sector policy document (i.e. the National Education and Training Sector Policy,2018) has omitted the OVC policy which had been discussed as a policy on its own in the EDSEC (2011) policy document. In the new policy sector document, there seems to be less focus on OVC as children that need additional support. OVC are only mentioned succinctly in the rationale for inclusive Education in Eswatini. The National Education and Training Sector Policy states that the goal for inclusive education in Eswatini is to “ensure that all learners (including OVC), access and complete basic education...” (2018, p. 13). This study notes with concern how the inclusion of OVC seems to be of secondary importance rather than a priority with regards to inclusive education in Eswatini. It is for this reason that this study proposes that this policy be re-examined such that issues that pertain to the education of OVC be addressed specifically as OVC inclusion policies.

The study also has implications on the school-based health facilities available to OVC. From the findings it transpired that OVC often needed medical attention and in cases where illnesses were mild, they were given medication from the first-aid kit by the Guidance and Counselling teacher. This, as stated in earlier chapters, is worrying because the Guidance and Counselling teachers did not indicate any form of medical-oriented qualifications. Having untrained personnel administer medical supplies to children could have negative repercussions on the health of the learners. Also, the visits from the Ministry of Health personnel seem to be few and far between which makes me deduce that they may not be very effective in supporting OVC health. This has significant implications on policies and practices that relate to teacher training in institutions of higher learning. The Ministry of Education and Training needs to have the modules offered at institutions of higher learning revised. The modules should include

First Aid and basic health care as one of the core modules the training of teachers. This also means that institutions of higher learning could ensure that students who graduate as teachers have completed that module. While the National Education and Training Sector Policy (2018) stipulates that the Ministry of Education and Training aims at “providing technical and professional support to enable newly qualified teachers to effectively deliver a dynamic school curriculum including ECCDE, guidance and counselling, LSE, STEM and ICT.”<sup>6</sup> (p.33), there is no mention of teachers being able to support the health requirements of children through qualifications in first aid and basic health. This policy therefore needs to be revisited such that it includes teachers being supported to deliver a dynamic curriculum which includes support for children’s health needs (including OVC) through first aid.

### **9.5.2 Implications for methodology**

With regards to the methodology, the findings to this study revealed that while Leeuw (2011) suggests that children in their late adolescent stage (as those who were participants in this study) are more likely to offer sincere responses, this group of children is also more likely to conceal information that may project them as deviant and delinquent in society. As mentioned earlier, from the analysis of the data, it transpired that knowledge relating to OVC engagement in activity that society viewed as antisocial, came from non-OVC learners or the Guidance and Counselling teachers. Revelations on engagement in marijuana and sex trade were articulations made by others and not OVC participants themselves. This observation has implications for research with children. It infers that researchers need to be careful in making generalisations on matters uncovered by research conducted with small numbers of children (Clark, 2005). Also, in addition to utilising traditional qualitative methods such as interviews and questionnaire in research, this study suggests that by using multi-sensory methods such as taking photographs, making audio-recordings or keeping dairies where they make journal entries on the phenomenon under investigation, more insight may be revealed to the researcher (Clark, 2005; Punch, 2002). Furthermore, while the voice of the insider in research is paramount as proposed by Slee (2011), this study proposes that when doing research with children in their adolescent years on their lived-experiences, engaging other participants who are not particularly the subject of the investigation may offer additional insights to those

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<sup>6</sup> LSE refers to Life Skills Education. STEM refers to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. ICT refers to Information and Communications Technology.

revealed by the insider. By so doing, the researcher might be able to ensure the credibility of the study. This implies that for researchers to produce a more accurate and believable study, they need to triangulate via data source where the individual views of OVC and the experiences they say to have encountered is corroborated against other participants (Shenton,2004).

## **9.6 Limitations**

This study has offered insights on the social experiences of OVC with regards to their inclusion or exclusion from education. Although the findings have offered perspectives with regards to the topic that was investigated, as Creswell (2013) highlights, every research project is not without its limitations. Like any other research study, this study has limitations that originate from various areas. This subsection discusses those limitations and the attempts made to mitigate them.

### **9.6.1 Sample size**

One of the limitations of this study is the size of the sample. Faber and Fonseca (2014) argue that the size of the sample influences the outcomes of the study. According to these authors, very small samples undermine the validity of a study. Since the study incorporated the views of only a small group of learners (fifty learners), the validity of this study may be undermined. Furthermore, based on the study sample, generalizations are difficult to make since the findings might not be transferrable. The data was collected in a unique environment hence the findings are not generalizable.

Although the study utilised a small number of participants, the use of open-ended questions in both the interviews and questionnaires served as a tool that mitigated the limitations that come with small sample sizes. As noted by Vasileiou et al. (2018), utilising open-ended questions in interviews limits the negative effects of a small sample size. Furthermore, the study utilised purposive sampling as an additional tool to enhance the validity of the study. Based on Vasileiou et al. (2018)'s argument that purposive sampling increases the chances of yielding rich-textured insights that are relevant to the study, by utilising purposeful sampling, the trustworthiness of this study were enhanced.

In addition to the above discussed interventions, the study also incorporated the voices of four Guidance and Counselling teachers from the four different regions of Eswatini, as a way to enhance the trustworthiness of the study. The four Guidance and Counselling teachers were

able to offer insights on the experiences of OVC in their different regions. As mentioned previously, some of the critical insights pertaining to the experiences of OVC were not revealed by the learner participants but by the Guidance and Counselling teachers. This means that the social experiences of some OVC other than those who participated in this study were also included. Furthermore, by asking question that required the learner participants to bring in the views of other people from their communities with regards to the experiences of OVC, diverse perspectives were brought to the fore. Consequently, while this study is based on a small population, it does offer some pertinent insights to the phenomenon under investigation.

### **9.6.2 Time**

Another limitation that was encountered in this study was that of time spent at the research site. While renowned qualitative researchers (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2003) argue that the time spent at the site of research is critical in enhancing the trustworthiness of a research study, I was unable to spend the amount of time that I had envisaged at the research site. For the reason that the school with the highest number of OVC in Eswatini is further away from my area of proximity, and that I was travelling to the school as frequently as I would have wanted was not possible. This means that as a researcher I was also employed on a fulltime basis during the research period, I was not able to spend prolonged time at the research site. While I was not able to spend every day at the research site, I managed to visit the school at least once a month for a period of nine months prior to the data collection stage. During these visits I was able to help out in the school kitchen and became a familiar figure to the prospective participants. Being able to visit the learners once a month, prevented a situation whereby the learner participants could have seen me as a complete stranger on the days in which data was collected. By the time I started collecting data, the students had seen me on various occasions around the school, hence I was not viewed as an absolute stranger.

### **9.6.3 Theoretical Framework**

Other limitations to the study were based on the theoretical framework within which this study is situated. As highlighted in previous chapters, the theory of resilience is one that is plagued by inconsistencies and controversies which as I researcher I had to work within for the study to maintain a balanced and true reflection of the experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion from education. The contrasting arguments made by various scholars on resilience being an individual concept or an environmental- oriented phenomenon created grounds on

which contrasting findings of resilience in OVC emerged. As some findings seemed to imply that resilience in OVC was an individual-oriented concept while others showed that it was an environment-based phenomenon, as a researcher, I had to create a balance between these views which will neither deny the individual aspect of resilience nor downplay the view of resilience as an environmental concept. In creating this balance, I argued that this study adopts the multidimensional approach to resilience. I stated that this study does not view resilience as a dichotomous conceptualisation. While the individual conceptualisation of resilience is acknowledged, this study does place the responsibility of succeeding no matter the circumstances in the hands of individual OVC. In so doing the study managed to mitigate the generalisations made by some authors that OVC who fail to pull themselves up and achieve inclusion and wellbeing through their own effort, are as those who are defective, irresponsible and lazy to work towards achieving inclusion and wellbeing in general (Work et al., 1990).

Furthermore; the study had to work around the universal view that resilience is all about strength. Rutter (2012) argues that resilience is seen by most as an all strength-based approach where researchers' eventually down-play the seriousness of the challenges and adversity that vulnerable groups experience. This theoretical limitation was circumvented by ensuring that as a researcher, I bring to the fore the adverse encounters that OVC experienced. A chapter which presented, discussed and analysed the adverse circumstances ensured that the risks and vulnerability that researchers often overlook as they push for an all strength-based approach (Rutter, 2012), were not ignored. By asking questions which brought not only the ability of OVC to withstand the challenges they encounter, but also those that brought to the fore the hardships and misfortunes they experience in their everyday lives, this study was able to circumvent this limitation.

### **9.7 Implications for further research**

While this study offered some insights into the lived-social experiences of OVC in Eswatini with regards to their inclusion in, or exclusion from education, deeper understandings on this phenomenon could be achieved through further research. In stimulating further research, I suggest an investigation of the experiences of OVC in all the regions of Eswatini. In so doing, experiences of OVC in additional regions rather than only in a semi-rural region could also be highlighted. This could be done by making a comparative study, whereby the experiences of OVC in urban and rural areas are compared and contrasted. Whiteside-Mansell et al. (2019) argue that the social experiences of children from marginalised groups in different geographical

locations are not similar. According to these authors, while experiences of children from urban areas are characterised by behavioural challenges, those of children from the rural areas are more aligned to poor health and hygiene. Comparing the experiences of these children within the framework of inclusion/exclusion might provide insights that will take this study forward.

This study can also be expanded by incorporating the voices of younger groups of OVC. The experiences of younger OVC can be compared and contrasted to those of older OVC as a way of bringing to the fore other experiences which could be different from those already highlighted by this study. As mentioned by in preceding chapters, age was one of the determinants of resilience in children (Werner & Smith, 1977). According to these authors, the older children get, the more resilient they become. This view suggests that the experiences of younger OVC are different from those of older OVC. Based on this observation, an enquiry that looks at the difference in their experiences and how those experiences impacted the inclusion /exclusion of younger and older OVC may take this study forward.

The findings also revealed that the community plays a significant role in the inclusion/exclusion of OVC from education and from life in general. A study that incorporates the views of the community on the experiences of OVC could also take this study forward. The members of the community could also include the voices of extended family members such as the grandparents who are among the key role players in the inclusion/exclusion of OVC. According to Dlamini (2020), pathways that significantly involve communities enhance individual agency. From Dlamini (2020)'s view that the community plays a critical role in addressing issues of poverty and other challenges that members experience in the community, it is evident that the community is a social entity that stimulates OVC agency. A study that incorporates the voices of the members of this social network with regards to the inclusion/exclusion could unveil how OVC can be better supported.

There is also need to explore teacher training and preparedness on issues of providing support to OVC. Pantic and Florian (2015) argue that teachers need to be prepared for handling matters of educational marginalisation and exclusion in schools. They need to know and understand how to effect agency in utilising an inclusive educational approach that supports the inclusion and academic success for all learners (Pantic & Florian, 2015). From the findings of this study, it is evident that teacher' preparedness to support the ever-increasing demands of diversity in school is minimal. As Forlin (2010) notes, it really would seem that relatively little has been done with regards to ensuring teacher preparedness and professional development to enable

them to respond to the demands of inclusive education Yet as Florian and Camedda (2020) suggest, inclusive methodologies to teaching should be a basic component of general teacher training. By bringing to the fore issues that highlight the demands of supporting OVC that inclusive education places on the teachers, a better understanding on how teachers can be assisted, could be reached. It is also by highlighting these teacher experiences that teacher education could be reframed such that it facilitates preparation that is realistic and manageable for teachers in the current inclusive school context (Forlin, 2010). Furthermore, while some of the findings revealed that teachers were not adequately trained and fully prepared to support children from marginalised groups, other findings revealed that some teachers were able to support OVC without necessarily buckling under the pressure of doing so. Further research on the experiences of teachers could therefore bring to the fore teacher's craft knowledge and how the successful practices that these teachers put in place can inform professional growth for other educators and teachers that are still undergoing training (Spratt & Florian, 2013).

The findings of this study also seem to suggest that OVC girls experience more adverse encounters than their male counterparts. As highlighted by Thwala et al. (2021), OVC girls from child-headed households in Eswatini encountered significant challenges in the communities in which they lived. While they received some support from the community and other international organisations, the state seemed to do very little to support these children (Thwala et al., 2021). I envisage that a comparative study of the experiences of girl-OVC and boy-OVC could unveil deeper insights of gender disparities in the lives of OVC. This investigation could also bring to the fore how OVC girls can be better supported if indeed they do encounter additional adversity.

This study also brought to the fore the concept of child-headed households and how it relates to the inclusion/exclusion of OVC from education. While a study conducted by Thwala et al. (2021) reveals that children from child-headed households experience significant poverty and a low quality life, this study does not ground these experiences within the concepts of inclusion/exclusion in education. An investigation that looks into the social experiences of OVC who head households with regards to their inclusion/exclusion from education could take this issue forward. From the observation that OVC who head households seem to be more vulnerable to exclusion from education than OVC who are not heads of households, a study that investigates their social experiences could bring to the fore the risks (if any) that these children encounter as heads of households and how they could be better supported in their communities.

Furthermore, this study brought to light the concept of ‘hidden’ resilience which enabled OVC inclusion in education. It would seem that not much research has been conducted on ‘hidden’ resilience with regards to OVC inclusion or exclusion from education. An investigation that looks into the concept of ‘hidden’ resilience in relation to OVC inclusion or exclusion could take this research forward in that it could bring to the fore deeper insights on how OVC can be supported such that the acts of ‘hidden’ resilience which they perform in an attempt to ensure their wellbeing do not further exacerbate their status of being perceived as the less desirable, anti-social or delinquent members of society.

## **9.8 Conclusions**

This study has investigated how the social experiences of OVC indicate their inclusion or exclusion from education. The study concludes that the social experiences of OVC indicate that OVC are both included and excluded from education. From the findings, this study observes that OVC experience binary encounters of inclusion and exclusion from the relationship of agency-adversity that characterises their everyday lives. This is brought about by the notion that, while OVC are able to develop effective strategies for directing their trajectories toward inclusion, the structures in the environment are often too powerful and rigid, allowing for OVC to be abused and suffer destitution. As a result, inclusive education for OVC becomes an arduous process whereby the rigidity of the structures around them often result in OVC having to discordantly navigate terrain at a personal cost. This study therefore puts forward the idea that inclusive education be a process that utilises relationships and other resources which draw on and enhance the agencies of vulnerable or marginalised groups. It concludes that the success of inclusive education with regards to OVC rests on adopting inclusive agency as a philosophy that brings together all agency-eliciting structures and processes such that OVC agency, resilience, inclusion and wellbeing in general is stimulated.

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## APPENDIX 1: LEARNER PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

**This questionnaire asks questions about the social experiences of OVC in the communities they live in. In this questionnaire OVC refers to child or children who have lost a parent/ both parents, lives in endangered settings or experiences; material, emotional and social shortages.**

**This questionnaire is anonymous. You do not have to write your name or any details that will reveal your identity. Please note that there are no correct or wrong answers. Every answer you give will be acceptable.**

1. How old are you?

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2. Who do you live with?

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3. Would you say you are an orphaned and vulnerable child (OVC)? If yes, please provide details.

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4. If you are not an OVC, do you know of other children who are orphaned and vulnerable in your area?

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5. Can you explain the circumstances that led to you being an OVC or to the children you know in your area becoming OVC?

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6. Who pays for your school fees or the school fees of OVC you know in your community?

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7. How do you or OVC you know get your food and clothing?

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8. After school what work / chores do you or OVC you know normally do?

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9. What needs to you as an OVC or for other OVC have?

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10. What things do you as an OVC or other OVC worry the most about?

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11. What problems do you as an OVC or other OVC encounter in the community?

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12. What problems do you as an OVC or other OVC encounter at school?

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13. What problems do you as an OVC or other OVC encounter generally?

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14. What are some of the things that the people in your community say about OVC?

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15. What does the community in which you live in do to support you as an OVC or other OVC?

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16. How does the school support OVC?

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17. How do you support other children who are OVC in your community?

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18. How do you think OVC could be better supported by the school?

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19. What do you think other children could do to support OVC?

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20. What do you think OVC can do to help improve their lives?

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## **APPENDIX 2: A 'MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE'**

Write a letter to your friend who lives on another planet and tell them about the experiences of orphaned and vulnerable children encounter in your area.

In this study, orphaned and vulnerable children are those who have lost a parent(s), live in endangered settings (those are the children who live in child-headed families, live with grandparents as guardians, live alone or on the streets) or children who experience; material, emotional or social shortages. In your letter, also include the changes you would like to see in the lives of those children. Your letter can be as long as you want it to be.

## **APPENDIX 3: LEARNER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Section A**

- a. How old are you?
- b. What is your favourite sport at the school?
- c. Which time is the best time of your day? Explain to me why.
- d. Which subjects are your favourite?
- e. Why are those your favourite subjects?
- f. What do you think you want to be when you complete school?

### **Section B**

- a. How many friends do you have?
- b. Tell me a bit about your friends.
- c. What do you usually do when you are not at school?

### **Section C**

- a. Whom do you live with at home?
- b. Can you tell me what you understand by the term OVC, which stands for orphan and vulnerable children?
- c. Do you know of anyone who you think is an OVC in your school or neighbourhood?
- d. Can you tell me a bit more about this person who is an OVC?
- e. What do people in your community or school say about OVC?
- f. Why do you think people say those things?
- g. How do you feel when people say those things?
- h. How do you think OVC feel when people say those things?
- i. What do OVC do when people say those things about them?

### **Section D**

- a. If you were the community elder in the village, what would you do for OVC?
- b. If you were the teacher at the school, how would you help OVC?
- c. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about OVC that we have not spoken about in the interview? Please feel free to say anything that you think is relevant about OVC.

## **APPENDIX 4: TEACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **Section A**

- a. How long have you been working at the school?
- b. How long have you been a Guidance and Counselling Teacher?
- c. How did you become the Guidance and Counselling teacher at the school?
- d. What other subject(s) do you teach besides the Guidance and Counselling?

### **Section B**

- a. Can you tell me a little about your job as a Guidance and Counselling teacher?
- b. What is it that you enjoy about your job?
- c. What are the problems you come across as a Guidance and Counselling teacher?

### **Section C**

- a. How would you define an orphaned and vulnerable child?
- b. How often do you talk to children who are OVC in your guidance and counselling sessions?
- c. Can you give me examples of how some of these children become orphaned and vulnerable?
- d. Can you tell me about some of the experiences that OVC report to have encountered generally?
- e. Can you please tell me about the experiences that OVC report to have encountered at school or with their education?
- f. What strategies are in place at the school that you believe support OVC?
- g. What strategies do you think could be added to support OVC generally?
- h. What will enhance knowledge on your job with regard to OVC?
- i. What has your experience with working with OVC taught you? What have you learnt?
- j. Is there anything you would like to say about OVC that you feel has not been covered in the interview? Please feel free to add anything relevant.

## APPENDIX 5: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

Wits School of Education



27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg 2193 • Private Bag 9, Wits 2050, South Africa  
Tel: +27 11 717-5221 • Fax: +27 11 717-3006 • E-mail: enquiries@ucwits.ac.za • Website: www.wits.ac.za

02 August 2018

Student Number: 909874

Protocol Number: 2018FCEC10D

Dear Sibili Precious Nsibande

### Application for Ethics Clearance: Doctor of Philosophy

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

**The lived-social experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion from education in Swaziland**

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that **clearance was granted**. Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies In Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. M. M. M.'.

Wits School of Education  
011 717-3416

cc Supervisor - Dr Louis Botha & Dr Yasmine Dominguez-Whitehead

## APPENDIX 6: LETTER TO THE MINISTRY of EDUCATION

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Sibili Nsibande and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I hereby kindly request permission to conduct research with children at ----- High school in Manzini and with four Guidance and Counselling teachers from the following high schools: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.

I am doing research on the **Lived-Social Experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion from education in Swaziland.**

The reason why I have chosen this school is because, according to the Swaziland, \_\_\_\_\_ High School has the highest number of OVC in the Manzini Region.

With your permission, I would like to investigate how lived social experiences of OVC indicate their inclusion or exclusion from education at the school. As part of this research, I also aim at looking into how OVC cope with the challenges they face when they lose parents or when parents are absent in their lives. I request to invite one class (all the children in the class), ranging from sixteen to eighteen years of age to participate in this research.

The intended research with the children will be conducted in three stages, over a period of ...months. I will start off by inviting the children to participate in the study. Those who accept the invitation to participate will fill in a questionnaire which will have questions relating to the experiences of OVC. During the next stage all the children will be asked to write a letter to a friend in another planet and tell them about the experiences of OVC and the changes they would like to see in the lives of the OVC. The last stage involves asking for children to volunteer to be interviewed individually on the experiences of OVC. All these activities will take place at the school during the guidance and counselling period.

The intended research with the Guidance and Counselling teachers will be held after I have completed the research with the children. The teachers will be invited to participate in an interview that will be forty-five minutes to one-hour long. The interviews will be conducted at the teacher's respective schools at a date and time convenient to the teacher.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the schools will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Their individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

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

Yours sincerely,

Sibili Nsibande

P.O. Box 2121

sibili2013@gmail.com

7631832

## APPENDIX 7: PERMISSION FROM MoET

The Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland



Ministry of Education & Training

Tel: (+268) 2 4042491/5  
Fax: (+268) 2 404 3880

P. O. Box 39  
Mbabane, SWAZILAND

12<sup>th</sup> October, 2018

Attention:

Head Teacher:

|             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
| School      | High School |
| High School | High School |
| High School | High School |

THROUGH

Lubombo, Manzini and Shiselweni Regional Education Officer

Dear Colleague,

**RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO COLLECT DATA FOR UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG STUDENT – MS. SIBILI PRECIOUS NSIBANDE**

1. The Ministry of Education and Training has received a request from Ms. Sibili Precious Nsibande, a student at the University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg that in order for her to fulfill her academic requirements at the University she has to collect data (conduct research) and her study or research topic is: *"The lived-social experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion from education in Swaziland"*. The population for her study comprises of one class ranging from sixteen to eighteen years of age and one guidance and counselling teacher from each of the above mentioned schools. All details concerning the study are stated in the participants' consent form which will have to be signed by all participants before Ms. Nsibande begins her data collection. Please note that parents will have to consent for all the participants below the age of 18 years participating in this study.
2. The Ministry of Education and Training requests your office to assist Ms. Nsibande by allowing her to use above mentioned school in the Lubombo, Manzini and Shiselweni regions as her research site as well as facilitate her by giving her all the support she needs in her data collection process. Data collection period is one month.

  
M.E. KHUMALO

ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

cc: Regional Education Officer – Lubombo, Manzini and Shiselweni  
Chief Inspector – Secondary/High  
§ Head Teacher of the above mentioned school  
Dr. Louis Botha – Research Supervisor

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## **APPENDIX 8: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL (School with highest number of OVC)**

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Sibili Nsibande and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on the **Lived-Social Experiences of OVC with regard to their inclusion or exclusion from education in Swaziland.**

With your permission, I would like to investigate how lived social experiences of OVC indicate their inclusion or exclusion from education at the school. As part of this research, I also aim at looking into how OVC cope with the challenges they face when they lose parents or when parents are absent in their lives. I request to invite one class (all the children in the class), ranging from sixteen to eighteen years of age to participate in this research.

The intended research will be conducted in three stages, over a period of three months. Before I invite the learners to be participants in the study, I request to help out in the kitchen, once a week for four weeks, so that I become a familiar figure to all the learners in the school. After four weeks, I will then invite the earmarked group of children to participate in the study. Those who accept the invitation to participate will fill in a questionnaire which will have questions relating to the experiences of OVC. During the next stage all the children will be asked to write a letter to a friend in another country and tell them about the experiences of OVC and the changes they would like to see in the lives of the OVC. The last stage involves asking for children to volunteer to be interviewed individually on the experiences of OVC. All these activities will take place at the school during the guidance and counselling period.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because, according to the Swaziland, your school has the highest number of OVC in the Manzini Region. I believe that because of the high number of students who are OVC in, I might be able to gain more insights into the social experiences of OVC.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Also, since this research is with OVC, it is noted that some of the learners who might be interested in participating in the study might be from child headed families and do not have a significant adult to give consent. As the school principal this study considers you as the custodian to these children during their time in school. I do kindly request that you sign the consent letters for learners who have no other significant adult to give their consent.

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

Yours sincerely,

Sibili P. Nsibande

P.O. Box 2121, Matsapa, Swaziland

sibili2013@gmail.com

+268-7631832

## **APPENDIX 9: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPALS (Guidance and Counselling Teachers)**

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Sibili Nsibande and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on the **Lived-Social Experiences of OVC with regard to their inclusion or exclusion from education in Swaziland.**

The proposed research aims to explore how lived social experiences of OVC indicate their inclusion or exclusion from education. I also aim at looking into how OVC cope with the challenges they face when they lose parents or when parents are absent in their lives.

I kindly ask for permission to interview the Guidance and Counselling teacher at your school on the issues related to the experiences of OVC. The reason why I have chosen your school is because there is a Guidance and Counselling teacher that the government has hired and trained to help children on the problems they may encounter at home and in school.

For the reason that the Guidance and Counselling teacher spends more time talking to children about their social experiences, I have invited the Guidance and Counselling teacher at your school to be part of this research. The prospective Guidance and Counselling teacher has been invited to participate in an individual interview that will be forty-five minutes to one hour. The interview will be conducted at the school at a time when the teacher is not teaching.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

The names of the research participants and identity of the school will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

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

Yours sincerely,

Sibili P. Nsibande

P.O. Box 2121,

Matsapa, Swaziland

sibili2013@gmail.com

+268-76318323

**APPENDIX 10: INFORMATION SHEET for GUIDANCE and COUNSELLING  
TEACHERS**

Dear Guidance and Counselling teacher

My name is Sibili Nsibande and I am student doing research for the purpose of obtaining in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am inviting you to participate in my research entitled **The Lived- Social Experiences of OVC regarding their Inclusion or Exclusion from Education in Swaziland.**

My research how lived social experiences of OVC indicate their inclusion or exclusion from education. I also aim at looking into how OVC cope with the challenges the face when the lose parents or when parents are absent in their lives.

The reason why I have chosen you as a potential participant is because you are the Guidance and Counselling teacher at the school. Guidance and Counselling teachers spend more time helping children with the problems they may encounter at home and in school. For the reason that the Guidance and Counselling teacher spends more time talking to children about their social experiences than any other teacher, they are more likely to have more insight into the experiences of OVC; hence may provide more insights to the research.

The interview will be conducted at the school at a day and time convenient to you. It will last approximately forty-five minutes to one hour. The interview will be audio-recorded.

Your name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. I will use pseudonyms instead of your real name in the write up. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Your participation is voluntary, so you can withdraw your permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and you will not be paid for this study.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Sibili Nsibande

P.O. Box 2121

sibili2013@gmail.com

76318323

## **APPENDIX 11: GUIDANCE and COUSSELLING TEACHER’S CONSENT FORM**

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to be a participant in my voluntary research project called:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give my consent for the following:

### **Permission to be interviewed**

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to

Answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

### **Informed Consent**

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotape
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 12: INFORMATION SHEET PARENTS/ GUARDIAN/ SIGNIFICANT  
ADULT**

Dear Parent/ Guardian/ Significant Adult

My name is Sibili Nsibande and I am a PHD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on: **The Lived Social Experiences of OVC with Regard to Inclusion or Exclusion from Education in Swaziland.**

My research involves looking into what OVC go through when they lose a parent or both parents in their lives and how what they go through affects the way they learn or the way they are taught in schools. I also aim at looking into how OVC cope with the challenges they face when they lose parents or when parents are absent in their lives.

The reason why I have chosen your child or the child under your guardianship is because she is part of a class with the highest number of OVC at the school. I believe that your child or the child under your care has encountered social experiences as an OVC or knows of other children who are OVC in the area. This means that your child is likely to have child more insight on the social experiences of OVC; hence their participation could be of great value to the research.

Would you mind if your child/ the child under your care participates in this research by filling in a questionnaire, writing an essay / message or if they volunteer, be interviewed individually on the topic I am investigating? If your child volunteers to be interviewed, he/she will be audio-taped.

Your child will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. S/he will be reassured that s/he can withdraw her/his permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and your child will not be paid for this study.

Your child's name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. His/her individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Sibili Nsibande

P.O. Box 2121

Matsapa, Swaziland

sibili2013@gmail.com

76318323

### **APPENDIX 13: Parent / Guardian/ Significant Adult Consent Form**

Please fill in and return the reply slip below indicating your willingness to allow your child to participate in the research project called:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ the parent/ guardian/ significant adult of

\_\_\_\_\_

I agree that my child may be audiotaped during interview or observations. YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only. YES/NO

#### **Permission to be interviewed**

I agree that my child may be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that he/she can stop the interview at any time and doesn't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

#### **Permission for questionnaire**

I agree that my child may be fill in a question and answer sheet or write a test for this study. YES/NO

#### **Permission for Message in a Bottle**

I agree to write a message on a sheet of paper as an essay for this study YES/NO

#### **Informed Consent**

I understand that:

- My child's name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- He/she does not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- He/she can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotape
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 14: INFORMATION SHEET LEARNERS

Dear Learner

My name is Sibili Nsibande and I am a PhD student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on **The Lived Social Experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion from education in Swaziland.**

My investigation involves finding out what OVC go through when they lose a permanent or when a parent or both parents are not in their lives. I purpose to establish how the experiences the OVC go through may result in the inclusion or exclusion of OVC in education. I am also interested in finding out how OVC cope with the challenges they experience when they lose a parent or both parents.

Would you mind if you participate in this study? I need your help with answering questionnaires and writing a message (in a form of an essay) with the rest of the children in your classroom. There is also going to be an individual interview session, which you may volunteer to participate in if you are agreeable. The interviews will be audio-taped.

Remember, this is not a test, it is not for marks and it is voluntary, which means that you don't have to do it. Also, if you decide halfway through that you prefer to stop, this is completely your choice and will not affect you negatively in any way.

I will not be using your own name but I will make one up so no one can identify you. All information about you will be kept confidential in all my writing about the study. Also, all collected information will be stored safely and destroyed between 3-5 years after I have completed my project.

Your parents have also been given an information sheet and consent form, but at the end of the day it is your decision to join us in the study.

I look forward to working with you!

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you

Sibili Nsibande

P.O. Box 2121

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76318323

## APPENDIX 15: LEARNER PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Please fill in the reply slip below if you agree to participate in my study called: The Lived-Social Experiences of OVC regarding their inclusion or exclusion from education in Swaziland.**

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Permission for questionnaire**

I agree to fill in a question and answer sheet or write a test for this study. YES/NO

### **Permission for Message in a Bottle**

I agree to write a message on a sheet of paper as an essay for this study YES/NO

### **Permission to be interviewed**

I would like to be interviewed for this study. YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to answer all the questions asked. YES/NO

### **Permission to be audiotaped**

I agree to be audiotaped during the interview or observation lesson YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only. YES/NO

### **Informed Consent**

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.
- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotape
- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_