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PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND SUPPORT PROGRAMMES FOR GRADE 7 CHILD-HEADED ORPHANS

by

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to all the participants from the child-headed households, whose courage and strength to confront adversities on a daily basis humbles me.

and

To my husband, Boitumelo Molefe

My boys Tebello and Letlotlo
ABSTRACT

The changing structures of family and the increase in number of orphans are progressively becoming noticeable both nationally and internationally. A growing number of South African children are left without parents who can provide them with basic needs and emotional care and support. The influence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the lives of children and adolescents who have lost one or both parents because of it. Orphans living in child-headed households within underprivileged communities are amongst the most vulnerable children and there is a need to stimulate broad-based discussion, and heighten awareness of and sensitivity to their plight, special needs and rights.

This study aims to explore and describe the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans in a primary school in Soweto and the support programmes available. It also aims to stimulate interest amongst other role players within government, agencies and communities to assist in addressing the situation of these learners through effective intervention strategies. The researcher has made use of a qualitative, phenomenological case study research design. Data was gathered through individual interviews, focus group interviews and the written life essays/stories, analysed according to Tesch’s method of open coding.

The findings of this research revealed that the Grade 7 child-headed orphans’ psychological experiences included anger, sadness, lack of trust and need for love, while their educational experiences included performance in class and transition to high school. They also indicated how they experienced support by School Based Support Team (SBST), teachers, peers, community and Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs). The results of the study led to the formulation of recommendations which are intended to heighten awareness via the Department of Education (DoE) and stimulate interest amongst role players, such as school counsellors, educational psychologists and social workers, who are assisting these vulnerable children.
# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................................................... i
DEDICATION .............................................................................................................................................. ii
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. iii
CHAPTER 1 .................................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................. 1
   1.2 ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH ............................................................................................. 2
   1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS .................................................................... 4
   1.4 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS ........................................................................................................... 5
   1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ......................................................................................................... 6
   1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION ............................................................................................................. 8
   1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY .................................................................................. 9
   1.7.1 Sampling ...................................................................................................................................... 11
   1.7.2 Data collection methods .............................................................................................................. 11
   1.7.3 Data Analysis Methods .............................................................................................................. 12
   1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS ...................................................................................................................... 12
   1.9 ETHICAL MEASURES ..................................................................................................................... 13
   1.10 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS .............................................................................................................. 14
   1.10 SUMMARY ...................................................................................................................................... 15
CHAPTER TWO .......................................................................................................................................... 16
   2.1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................. 16
   2.2 THE EMERGENCE OF CHILD-HEADED ORPHANS ................................................................. 16
      2.2.1 Child-headed Orphans within the South African Context ......................................................... 16
   2.3 THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILD-HEADED ORPHANS ............................................................... 18
      2.3.1 Psychological experiences of child-headed orphans ................................................................. 18
      2.3.2 Educational experiences of child-headed orphans ................................................................. 20
   2.4 THE SCHOOL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ........................................... 22
      2.4.1 School Based Support Team (SBST) ...................................................................................... 22
      2.4.2 Guardians or Carers ............................................................................................................... 23
      2.4.3 Peer support .......................................................................................................................... 24
      2.4.4 Community centres .............................................................................................................. 25
CHAPTER 1
RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Child-headed households are not new in South African society, and although there is limited information regarding them, Maqoko and Dreyer (2006) confirm that situations do exist in which older siblings head households. A Child-headed household can be defined as a household in which the children are orphans and are headed by a child who is recognised as being independent, responsible for providing leadership, making major decisions in running and maintaining it, as well as feeding and caring for younger siblings and adopting de facto adult/parent roles (Plan Finland Kumpulantie, 2005).

Some of the difficulties that children who live in child-headed households have to contend with are developmental and emotional challenges, particularly during adolescence. This study focuses on psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans in a primary school in Soweto and the support programmes available there. The child-headed orphans are going through a process of identity formation and decision-making, as they will be leaving primary school for high school. This process is made more difficult to navigate because they often lack parental involvement regarding their socialisation and they are in need for affection in the form of love, care and support (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) identifies the instability and unpredictability of family life that society has created as the most destructive force in a child’s development. From a bio-ecological systems perspective it is noted that children who lack constant mutual interaction with important adults are at risk of missing psycho-educational support. If relationships in an immediate microsystem break down the child does not have the tools to explore other levels of his/her environment. According to Ayieko (1997), orphaned children who look for affirmation that is not present due to lack of a primary caregiver may look for attention in inappropriate places, such as taverns, or nightclubs.
Ayieko (1997) found that when children grow without parents or adults in their families there is no guarantee of normal psychosocial development. Religious and cultural teachings are not instilled and the sense of security is threatened. Leatham (2005) endorses the value of parent-child interaction in imparting religious and cultural messages to children. Richter, Manegold and Pather (2004) argue that the loss of parents as providers for the material and emotional needs of children leaves them emotionally scarred and marginalised, resulting in them resorting to delinquency and criminal behaviour, which in turn impact on their performance at school.

Traditionally, children who were viewed as being ‘at risk’ were those who were threatened academically, socially and emotionally as a result of their domestic or other circumstances (Leatham, 2005). Children, who are abused, neglected or abandoned by their families, or traumatised by their circumstances, are at risk of underachieving academically. They register poor school attendance and may drop out of school more frequently (Garson, 2003).

1.2 ORIENTATION OF THE RESEARCH


South Africa has the fastest growing rate of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world and that the number of children orphaned by AIDS is increasing at an alarming rate and this is becoming a serious social problem. …absenteeism from school by learners is escalating. Educators are frustrated by low levels of performance by their learners, personal hygiene amongst learners is becoming a problem and that the integrity, cohesion, capacity and efficacy of the extended family as a social support network are being undermined by factors such as social upheavals, poverty, unemployment and over-stretched resources (cited in Masondo, 2006, p.1).

Educational institutions are most likely to be affected by the absenteeism and possible dropout of learners, as many will need time to run households and take care of younger siblings (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006). Research has found that
such learners often do not go to school because they have to beg on the streets or find part-time jobs just to be able to feed their young siblings (Leatham, 2005). According to Taggart (2008), it is more likely that learners will have to forfeit their school attendance and experience interruptions in their education, even withdraw from the school completely. They find themselves having to assume the premature role of caregiver in the home, performing household tasks and caring for siblings and sick parents (Cohen, Epstein & Amon, 2005).

According to Foster (2000) the following are the reasons for the formation of child-headed households:

- Increasing HIV/AIDS-related parental loss
- Relatives being unwilling or unable to accommodate additional children in their household due to economic constraints
- The death or illness of a relative, for example, an elderly caregiver, who had previously taken charge of the children concerned
- The lack of contact and the distance between the relatives and the remaining children
- The presence of older children willing and able to provide care to younger siblings
- Possible inheritance of the family home as surviving children.

The rationale of this research is based on the psycho-educational rights of the child, as highlighted in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), which upholds the right to education and health of children, and states that in matters affecting the child his/her view should be heard and given due weight in accordance with age and maturity. The child has the right to family or parental care or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment, and his/her best interests are considered paramount in every matter. The child should not be required or permitted to perform work or provide services that place at risk his/her wellbeing, education, physical or mental health, or spiritual, moral or social development.

Orphans from child-headed families can be exposed either positively or negatively to peer influences, like all other children, but because there is no adult guidance
they are at more risk of exposure to negative peer influences (Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen & Fritz, 2011). It is evident that children react strongly to the loss of a meaningful person and show their reactions in conformity with the stages of protest, despair and detachment. Feelings of sadness, rage and longing also follow after the loss of a significant individual (Webb, 1993).

Household structures in many countries in Africa have been profoundly changed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic as, traditionally, orphans were absorbed by members of the extended family but today this safety net no longer works and many are left to fend for themselves. Whilst it is known that child-headed households do exist in South Africa and that children living in these households are vulnerable, it is not known how prevalent they are or how to deal with the children’s psycho-social problems (Akim, 2012) or meet their educational needs.

Although orphans of each age group are marginally more likely than non-orphans to attend primary school, the trend is reversed at secondary level, where non-orphans attend in greater proportion than orphans. They are more likely than non-orphans to drop out of primary school and not reach secondary school or repeat a grade (Smiley, Omoeva, Sylla & Chaluda, 2012). The Grade 7 child-headed orphans chosen in this study were at this stage, preparing for transition from primary to high school.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to explore and describe the psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 learners who are orphans in a child-headed household. It looks at the support programmes for them at a primary school in Soweto. Orphans living in child-headed households are among the most vulnerable children and the protection of their rights deserves to be the main focus of all individuals and agencies dealing with them (Masondo, 2006). The research question is as follows:

- What are the psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans in a primary school in Soweto?

A sub-question is:
• How do Grade 7 child-headed orphans experience psycho-educational support programmes at a selected primary school?

1.4 RESEARCH ASSUMPTIONS

Various assumptions were held by the researcher, grouped as follows.

1.4.1 Metatheoretical assumptions

Metatheoretical assumptions are not testable but deal with human beings and their societies (Botes, 1993). AIDS has reduced the capacity of communities to support and care for children, and changed the family structure and caregiving patterns. The burden of care now falls on those who have the least capacity to provide parenting support and care for the affected children, for example the elderly and the young. From an educational perspective, learners need help and guidance even though they cannot consciously determine the nature of it. The educator, who knows the learners and studies their actions, can interpret the learner’s behaviour and render the assistance needed. The maturation of the learner is realised through constant interaction between the educational help and independent self-determination. Education has as its concern the learners in totality, as they build up their own life-world within the framework of their abilities, limitations and expectations, which exist in their situations and cultures. However, even with the necessary abilities they may not succeed because the explanations and guidance they need are not forthcoming (Masondo, 2006). This study explored the psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 orphans in child-headed households and the support programmes in a primary school in Soweto.

1.4.2 Theoretical assumptions

Theoretical assumptions are testable and form part of the existing and acceptable theory of a discipline (Botes, 1993). This therefore suggests that the literature and the theoretical statement on which this statement is based have a bearing on the
researcher’s theoretical assumptions. The researcher went to the field without any preconceived ideas, utilising bracketing and intuiting. After the data was analysed the results were contextualised in literature by means of a literature review (Masondo, 2006).

1.4.3 Methodological assumptions

According to Botes (1993), the methodological assumptions concern the researcher’s views on the nature and structure of knowledge in a particular discipline, and these direct their research designs. The researcher supports a functional approach to research, that is, research is conducted to obtain knowledge to improve practice (Masondo, 2006). One of the reasons for conducting qualitative research is that the study is exploratory, with the researcher listening to information and building a picture based on ideas (Creswell, 1994).

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Maree and Van der Westhuizen (2007) it is necessary to develop a theoretical framework in which a researcher can locate his/her study. It is also necessary to understand how the researcher chooses to view a specific situation according to certain theories and models (Taggart, 2008). The conceptualisation of this study is inductive because the study used a qualitative approach. In order to understand the lived psycho-educational experiences of orphans in Grade 7 from child-headed households, it is important to recognise how the past has shaped the realities of today. Change within a family, either on a political or socio-economic level, has an inevitable though not necessarily predictable effect on other levels of the system or sub-systems (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006).

Green (2001) believes that a bio-ecological systems approach suggests that individuals are likely to experience a range of contexts that are shared with others, yet with interaction of individual characteristics, time, contexts and change, these would have different consequences for different individuals. The child-headed family, in which both parents are unavailable to guide or support the child, should
be understood as part of the network that differently contributes and influences early adolescents' development.

This research inquiry is situated within an interpretivist or constructivist framework (a joint term used in Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004, p.19) to qualitatively explore and understand the way people construct meaning in the context of their social practice. Using the lenses of bio-ecological systems the researcher will explore, understand and describe the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans and the support programmes available at the school. It uses Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems model to highlight the interaction and interdependence between learners, teachers, communities, and schools. They construct their realities through systemic interaction within their environment, and so both influence and are influenced by the environment in which they live (Pillay, 2011).

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) make use of Bronfenbrenner’s model of development to explain how individual psychological development occurs against the backdrop of four interacting dimensions, resulting in development, namely, person factors (temperament), process factors (forms or interaction that occur in a particular setting), contexts (family, school and classroom), and time (changes over time in the person or environment). These dimensions are coupled with four social systems in which one develops, namely microsystem (family, school and classroom), mesosystem (interaction of different systems), exosystem (policies and laws) and macrosystem (beliefs, culture and values). They all occur within a chronosystem (developmental timeframes).

In the light of the research inquiry the Grade 7 child-headed orphans’ lived psychological and educational experiences were explored. The researcher also explored the psychological and educational experiences of the support programmes provided at the primary school.
1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

The following concepts are clarified below in terms of how they are understood in the study.

1.6.1 Child-headed Household

A child-headed household in this study is understood to be a household in which the individual primarily responsible for its day-to-day running is 18 years old or younger (Foster, Mafuka, Drew & Kravolec, 1997). Sloth-Nielson (2004) defines it as any household in which a child up to or under 18 is called upon to assume care-giving responsibilities. Bouwer (2002) states that it is a unit in which the parents or adult caregivers have died or abandoned the children, and the head of the household is a child under the age of 18. According to Leatham (2005), many child-headed households are run by AIDS-affected children who are living in them, caring for a brother or sister under. Drawing on these various definitions, for the purpose of this study the term thus refers to a household run by a child under 18.

1.6.2 Orphan

In South Africa, an orphan is defined as a child with no surviving parent caring for him or her after one of the parents has died (Draft Children's Bill, 2002, in Nkomo, 2006). The Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary (1987, p.1016) defines an orphan as a child whose parents are dead. UNAIDS defines orphans as children below the age of 15 who have lost either mother or both mother and father (Whiteside & Sunter, 2000, p.80). For the purpose of this study the term refers to a child from birth to the age of 18 who has lost both parents.

1.6.3 Psychological Experience

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology (Reber, Allen & Reber, 2009) defines the word experience as any event through which one has lived and the sum of total
knowledge gained from participation in an event. It adds personal, subjective phenomena, in terms of what is ‘in the head’. Others characterise it in terms of what is ‘out there’ (Reber, Allen & Reber, 2009, p.78). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (Soanes & Stevenson, 2004) defines it as a general concept comprising knowledge or skill in observation of something or an event gained through involvement in or exposure to that thing or event. For this study, experience will mean the exposure, knowledge and skill gained by the Grade 7 orphans while living in a child-headed household.

Reber et al. (2009, p.247) defines **psychological** as “directed toward the will or toward the mind specifically in its conative function”, therefore, for the purpose of this inquiry **psychological experience** will refer to the emotional and mental wellbeing of Grade 7 child-headed orphans. The study also examines their psychological experiences and academic performance in class. The effort of supporting them will include therapy and counselling services to maintain their psychological and emotional wellbeing.

1.6.4 Educational Experience

**Education** is defined as the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools (Reber et al., 2009). For the purpose of this inquiry the concept of **educational experience** thus refers to the academic performance and educational needs of the learners. This will include aspects related to their ability to comprehend what is being taught and the support that is offered at the school to make teaching and learning conducive. This study also looked at the support programmes available to help orphans cope with their studies.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research study provided insight into the experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans from a primary school in Soweto. A constructive interpretive
research paradigm (Henning, Van Rensberg & Smit, 2004) focused on Grade 7 child-headed orphans’ subjective experiences on how they constructed their social world and interacted with their social environment (Maree, 2010). The study was descriptive, exploring psycho-educational experiences and the support programmes of the Grade 7 orphans (Mouton, 2001).

A phenomenological case study design was used to investigate the lived psycho-educational experiences of the learners in question (Giorgi, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009). Yin (1984, 2012) defines a case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and in-depth understanding of a case experienced in a real-world setting. This study is a case study because it looked at the lived experiences of learners in Grade 7 and child-headed households. A case study design was purposefully chosen in order to support a thorough investigation of the research participants on their lived psycho-educational experiences as Grade 7 orphans from one primary school in Soweto.

The researcher made use of a phenomenological research design in order to understand and interpret the meaning that the orphans in child-headed households had given to their life experiences within their context (De Vos, 1998). A phenomenological study captures the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans, their deeply held beliefs and feelings or worldviews as expressed in their own words, thus supporting the aim of the inquiry to gain deeper understanding. Henning et al. (2004) recommend that a phenomenological researcher allow participants to relate their experiences in their own words, and by means of lengthy individual reflective interviews, trying to capture them without structure. Phenomenological studies focus on the essence or structure of an experience, interested in showing how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experiences, trying to deal with inner un-probed experiences of participant’s everyday lives (Merriam, 2002). Through using focus group interviews, participants can share their experiences in their everyday lives, also linking these experiences with one another and deepening these complex meanings they attribute to their lives (Leatham, 2005).
1.7.1 Sampling

Purposive sampling method was used and only participants who meet the criteria formed part of research sample, as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter three. The school was chosen purposively as a primary school in Soweto that would fulfil the criteria for the research. Situated in the D10 Johannesburg North District of the Department of Education (DoE), it was the only primary school to be purposively selected, satisfying the requirements of “specificity” and “uniqueness” because it had learners from the child-headed households. It was a public co-educational primary school, with languages for learning and teaching (LOLTs) being Sesotho, Setswana and Sepedi. The school ran two Grade R, two Grade 1, and two Grade 2 classes, as well as single Grade 3 to Grade 7 classes. There were 39 Grade 7 learners in class, from a total of 382 learners in the entire school. The staff consisted of the principal, two heads of department (HODs), five educators, one volunteering educator and two Grade R practitioners. The socio-economic status of the parents was low; hence there was a feeding scheme and free uniform for needy learners. For the purpose of this study, and to protect the identity of participants the school was given a pseudonym of “Kgola-thuto primary school.

1.7.2 Data collection methods

In this inquiry process, data was collected from the Grade 7 child-headed orphans from *Kgola-thuto primary school in Soweto. Qualitative methods of data collection were used to explore their lived psycho-educational experiences. To maximize the probability for the trustworthiness of the findings of the study, triangulation or multiple operationalism techniques were used to collect data, complementing each other and addressing respective shortcomings (Mouton & Marais, 1990).

Throughout this process the following methods were used:

- **Semi-structured Individual Interviews** were conducted with five (three girls and two boys) Grade 7 orphans from the child-headed households. In-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted and audiotaped. Observations were made by recording the activities and conversations and
field notes were taken. The interviews took place after school for not more than two hours per day.

- **Focus group interviews** were conducted with five Grade 7 child-headed orphans until data saturation was reached. The interviews were also audiotaped and field notes taken. They took place after school hours.

- **Life stories/essays** – five Grade 7 child-headed orphans were requested to write about their psycho-educational experiences of living in a child-headed household. All the materials (writing pads, coloured pens and pencils, correcting fluid and erasers) were prepared beforehand. It was free (unguided) writing and conducted after school hours, in a language of their choice.

### 1.7.3 Data Analysis Methods

Content analysis was used to analyse the themes and recurring patterns of meaning in the transcribed interviews and life essays or stories (Merriam, 1998). The individual and group interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and triangulated with field notes and other available data sources (Strauss & Myburgh, 2001). The researcher analysed the data in smaller, more manageable units that were grouped into similar/common themes (Henning et al., 2004), in order to understand and interpret the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans. All data obtained through tapes was analysed according to Tesch’s (1990, 142) open coding strategy, discussed in detail in Chapter Three. The role of the researcher as the primary research instrument (Strauss & Myburgh, 2001) was a central technique for collecting data. The findings were supported by the existing theory, discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

### 1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Strauss and Myburgh (2001) highlight four measures of trustworthiness in a qualitative study that need to be adhered to; namely: credibility, transferability,
dependability and confirmability. These will be further discussed in Chapter three. Furthermore, trustworthiness was enhanced by triangulation (utilisation of multiple methods of data collection and sources of data).

1.9 ETHICAL MEASURES

Ethics or moral philosophy relates to the study of morality, that is, decisions about what is right and what is wrong in respect of behaviour that can influence the welfare of humans. *Meta-ethics* deals with language, logical structure and reasoning; *normative ethics* is concerned with standards of conduct; and *applied or practical ethics* is concerned with solving ethical problems emerging in a profession such as psychology (Allan, 2008, p.17). Ethical considerations began with the submission of my proposal outlining the research to the Faculty Ethics Committee and receipt of ethical clearance (see Appendix A). A letter from the DoE and principal allowing the research to take place and to show that the study complies with the standard ethical considerations and confidentiality clause is attached (see Appendix B). The principal and the managing director of Sizanani community centre (NGO) signed the consent letters for all the participants (see Appendices C and D) and acted in *loco parentis*. All the participants signed the assent forms (see Appendix E).

As the researcher has made use of human ‘subjects’ as participants, this raised the issue of ethics. Therefore, ethical principles served as a basis for the researcher’s development of ethical behaviour, implying that the researcher showed respect for the personal integrity of the participants. It was important that the researcher provides a clear contract for participants, so that they may be clear beforehand about the activities in which they engage (Masondo, 2006). The participants were informed from the start of the study that their participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw from it at any point, without penalty. No names were used in any transcriptions, in order to protect privacy and identity (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006). For the purpose of this study pseudonyms were used to protect their identity.
With regard to the recording of sessions, where this is done for feedback and supervision purposes, participants were informed of the wish to record the sessions before or during the sessions (Masondo, 2006).

1.10 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter One has introduced the reader to the background and orientation of the research study. The rationale and problem statement were presented in detail and the research questions and objectives, as well as research design, methods of data collection and analysis briefly presented. The paradigmatic perspective for the study was described, according to the metatheoretical, theoretical and methodological assumptions. In addition, the ethical issues and the role of the researcher were discussed.

Chapter Two is a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework that supports the research inquiry. This provides a foundation for the study based on a review of the literature. The researcher raises logical and coherent arguments supported by the theory.

Chapter Three elaborates on the research design and methodology supporting the study. The methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation are explained and described, with measures to ensure trustworthiness followed by description of data collection and data analysis techniques.

Chapter Four provides an analysis and discussion of the themes that emerged from the findings of the research study and its interpretation. The themes were coded using Tesch’s (De Vos, 1998, p.343-344) method of coding. This included an exploration of the psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 orphans in child-headed households and the support programmes at school. A literature review was included to contextualise the research results.

Chapter five summarises the findings of the research inquiry. The researcher reflects on the limitations of the study as well as draws conclusions and makes recommendations for further research.
1.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has dealt with orientation of the main aim of the study. The research objectives and questions were concisely illustrated. The research method adopted in this study as well as the steps followed in this research have been outlined. The chapter divisions have also been outlined. The next chapter will focus on the theoretical framework and related literature.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A child-headed household is contextualised in terms of a change in the structure and composition as well as the functioning of a family. It has been defined as one in which the absence of an adult, child or young person has assumed the role of a primary caregiver in respect of another child or other children in a household. They are expected to take the responsibility for meeting the basic needs of care and support of other members of the household. Such households exist not only as a result of the deaths of parents as a result of the Aids pandemic, but also through other economic issues such as conflicts, war, displacement, separation, desertion and migrant work (Human & Van Rensburg, 2011).

2.2 THE EMERGENCE OF CHILD-HEADED ORPHANS

Traditionally, orphaned children were incorporated into extended family structures, however, as a result of the rapid rates at which orphan-hood and destitution are currently occurring, families and communities find it difficult or are not willing to respond to the need of supporting and caring for orphaned children (Bequele 2007). A new form of family structure, known as a child-headed household, has now emerged, posing unique challenges because such children are not well prepared to take on the role of parent. It places an even larger burden on societal structures in terms of the management of health and social services (Human & Van Rensburg, 2011).

2.2.1 Child-headed Orphans within the South African Context

In a speech by Social Development Minister Zola Skweyiya in November 2007 (Roth, Lindley & Ashley, 2011), it was stated that:
We encourage children from child-headed households to remain in their communities instead of alternative care, such as orphanages. It is important for them to grow up with a cultural identity and a sense of belonging. It also places an obligation on neighbours and the community in general to look after these children, and not outsource this responsibility to government.

This statement recognises that children from child-headed households require a sense of belonging that continues within a particular family and culture. However, the last part of his speech leaves a great responsibility on the shoulders of the community and not of the government (Roth, Lindley & Ashley, 2011).

It is apparently difficult to enumerate child-headed households, as communities may be reluctant to acknowledge their existence. They may be under-represented in surveys because an adult is generally required to complete the household questionnaire (Monasch & Boerma, 2004). Sometimes the relatives may offer to support these orphans in order to benefit from their social grants. The main problem with estimates of the number of child-headed households in South Africa is that they are based on household surveys that are not designed with the objective of determining their number.

Besides this, although reliable figures are difficult to obtain, little is known about the characteristics of support and assistance to these households. It is generally agreed that it is better for orphaned children to be supported by their families or by people in their own communities, rather than in an institution (UNICEF, 2004). The non-government community centres have limited information on the number of these households as the status changes continually. It is often stressed that members of the extended family will take care of children who have lost their parents. It was argued that in the past the sense of responsibility of extended families in southern Africa was “almost without limits” (Van Dijk, & Van Driel, 2012).

The great majority of orphans in South Africa live with extended families, particularly grandmothers and aunts (MadhaVan, 2004; Richter & Desmond, 2008). However, there is increasing concern about their capacity to absorb
orphans in the face of serious economic constraints (Wild, Flisher, & Robertson, 2011).

2.3 THE EXPERIENCES OF CHILD-HEADED ORPHANS

Children in these households have gone through the serious hardships of losing their parents and struggle to make a living or continue to attend school. This study looked into the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 grade-headed orphans and the impact on their lives.

2.3.1 Psychological experiences of child-headed orphans

According to a study by Donald and Clacherty (2005), apart from coming to terms with the painful loss of their parents, children in child-headed households are often poorer than those in adult-headed households. Van Dijk and Van Driel (2012) found that most child-headed households presented challenging circumstances, whether poor and unsafe conditions with occupants unable to fulfil their nutritional requirements and in urgent need of material support. The children expressed a serious need for emotional support from community members and the school community. Most had gone through very difficult periods, particularly when their caregiver was ill or dying, and they had no emotional support in the form of counselling (Van Dijk & Van Driel, 2012).

2.3.1.1 Emotional challenges

Daniel (2005) indicated in his study that few of the parents had talked with their children about their approaching death, which aggravated the shock and anxiety the youngsters felt when they died as they worried about who would care for them. Many children were not even involved during the funeral preparations or talking about what would happen after it. They covered up their emotional and psychological hurt by silencing the topic, thus inflicting hidden wounds, causing complex emotional and psychosocial trauma (Daniel, 2005).
Besides the unresolved grief over their parent(s) death, the oldest siblings had difficulties in fulfilling the parenting role. They felt uncertain and anxious about being able to care for their younger siblings due to a lack of resources. They still valued the advice from an adult about running a household or guidance on raising children. However, most were unable to share their problems because they were isolated in their communities (Van Dijk, & Van Driel, 2012).

A number of studies have shown high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among poor urban children in South Africa (Seedat, Nyamai, Njenga, Vythilingum & Stein, 2004). A strong perception of support from carers, siblings, school teachers, principals, friends, and others may reduce the devastating effects of exposure to trauma. Evidence for this comes from findings of Cluver, Fincham and Seedat (2009), that participants who perceived their social support to be high demonstrated significantly lower levels of PTSD symptoms than those who perceived their social support to be low.

2.3.1.2 Relational experiences

Preliminary evidence suggests that individual differences in children's responses to the death of a parent may be influenced by personal characteristics and the general wellbeing and pre-existing mental health. However, it is the functioning level of the child's primary caretaker after the death, their relationship with the child, and the quality of care and support they are able to offer that appear to be of primary importance (Roth, Lindley & Ashley, 2011). Effective social support from friends and adults outside the family has also been found to be a protective factor for bereaved children. In contrast, low socioeconomic status and the presence of additional stressors have been associated with poorer child functioning.

On the other hand, children also reported some exploitation, such as other family members taking their parents' assets and pension entitlements, and a number of children reported being beaten by older family members. Girls reported sexual abuse, such as elderly men promising to take them as second wives and raping them, but then not fulfilling their promise. In desperate need of love and support,
both material and emotional, they effectively sell themselves to adults who take advantage and exploit them (Roth, Lindley & Ashley, 2011).

Guardians can have a wide variety of other relationships with the children they are raising, including aunts, uncles, great-grandparents, cousins, family friends and siblings. It was said that these arrangements were often made following the death of one or both parents, which meant that everyone involved, carer as well as young person being cared for, was dealing with feelings of grief and loss while coming to terms with the new living arrangements.

Siblings would probably be younger than other types of carers, possibly with less experience of being a parent and less of the sort of experience which would be useful in negotiating with social care agencies about the support and services they require. While all relative care arrangements involve some degree of role redefinition, for example, grandparents or aunts and uncles taking on a parenting role, there might be particular issues for siblings, who may be used to seeing themselves as a group on roughly equal terms with each other but then have to accept one of this group in a role of parental authority (Roth, Lindley & Ashley, 2011).

2.3.2 Educational experiences of child-headed orphans

The child-headed family, in which both parents are unavailable to guide and support the child, may have an impact on children’s development. They lack uniforms, school fees, books, and money to buy food or to pay for educational excursions (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006). All these unfulfilled needs impact on the orphans’ school performance.

2.3.2.1 Scholastic performance

Education for the future outcomes of children and societal development is of great importance, affecting the personal development and quality of life (UNICEF, 1990). Orphaned children have an increased vulnerability if not enrolled or being
delayed in school. Surveys conducted in Africa have yielded evidence that orphaned children have lower levels of school attendance and are more likely to be behind in school than non-orphaned counterparts (Monasch & Boerma, 2004). These household and family factors affect educational outcomes for children in South Africa, where child fostering has been and continues to be a crucial part of child-headed orphans' development. The uncles and aunts may volunteer to take care of these orphans, but with little or no support in their education (Chuong & Operario, 2012). Findings by Pillay and Nesengani (2006, p.135) were that:

... adolescent headed households experienced difficulty with academic achievements, often as a result of poor concentration, failure to complete educational tasks, including the passing of tests and examinations, and poor self-esteem. Furthermore, educators’ negative attitudes and their lack of understanding of the adolescents’ background, as well as their failure to recognise the problems of the learners, also contributed to poor academic achievement.

2.3.2.2 Transition from primary to high school

According to Mavise (2011), decision-making appeared to be stressful when children are very young and unable to provide for themselves or others in the household. In some situations, children made decisions that appeared to undermine their wellbeing in the long term. For example, some dropped out of school to join the informal job market because they did not see the immediate value of education. Others engaged in survival sex, petty theft and drug dealing because of poverty however those child-headed orphans who value education have to decide on the high school that they would like to attend in the following year (Mavise, 2011). They have to apply on time and make sure that they choose a school with good results. Decision-making thus emerges as an important way through which children attempt to adapt to and to regain control of their lives in difficult circumstances. This is not to deny that some of them are vulnerable, nor should it be used as an excuse to deprive them of the support they need (Mavise, 2011).
2.4 THE SCHOOL SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The impact of social relationships of child-headed households contributes to their ability to cope, with emphasis placed on the children’s interpretations and valuations of the support. The opinion that the extended family can still fulfil a supportive role continues to exist. Some argue that, as a consequence of the changes and challenges, the shape or form of the support may have altered (Foster, Makufa, Drewn & Kralovec, 1997; Mathambo & Gibbs, 2009). In this line of reasoning, child-headed households are sometimes referred to as a ‘new coping mechanism of the extended family’ because they are seen as a burden and have to be checked on occasionally (Van Dijk & Van Driel, 2012).

Although Van Dijk and Van Driel (2012) draw the conclusion that child-headed households are consequently not isolated from relatives, it is unknown to what extent these relations contribute to children’s coping and whether this support is sufficient or secure. The expectation is that extended family members should support orphaned children, and in Sesotho culture the community is expected to share wealth with poorer members. When the children feel accepted or loved by the provider of support they are more positive about its quality, irrespective of how minimal the actual support was (Van Dijk & Van Driel, 2012).

2.4.1 School Based Support Team (SBST)

In a study conducted by Wood and Goba (2011), it was apparent that teachers received more training in prevention education, through the medium of life skills, than in how to care for and support the growing number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in their schools. Workshops on preventative measures conducted by the DoE did not equip them with the necessary skills. Early identification and the lay counselling training could be seen as an attempt to equip teachers to address the needs of OVC. Findings of a study conducted by Wood and Goba (2011) also make it clear that there was a need for all teachers in the school to work together to address the care and support of OVC. There is a need
for school leadership to take the initiative to strategically and democratically plan how to approach the problems holistically and systematically. As such, schools need to cooperate with outside agencies and other sources of support, including parents, the general community and the non-government centres that are taking care of orphans and vulnerable children. According to Wood and Goba (2011), the DoE does not take into account the lived realities of teaching in communities that are plagued with the problems associated with endemic poverty and other social challenges. Rather than helping school communities to find workable solutions for offering support and care to OVC within their environment, the DoE isolates a specific group of teachers who are then perceived to be solely responsible for offering care, support and protection to learners. Schools can self-generate specific solutions to their particular problems, thus the whole school system becomes responsible for creating conditions that are conducive to the mental, physical, environmental and social health of learners and teachers, as well as families and community members, rather than the Life Orientation teacher alone (Wood & Goba, 2011).

All teachers could be trained in basic counselling skills and helped to develop strategies for coping with stress and negative emotions. School leadership could take the initiative to implement and monitor strategies that would promote the creation of a safe, trusting environment based on negotiated and accepted values and zero tolerance for stigmatisation and discrimination. Strategic goals could be set for equipping the physical environment with adequate resources to meet educational needs and promote the attainment of basic, safety and self-esteem needs of learners (Wood & Goba 2011).

**2.4.2 Guardians or Carers**

Focus is on schooling because it plays a key role in a child’s later life opportunities (United Nations, 1994) and is frequently disrupted by parental absence or death. Previous research on schooling has considered the implications of headship in greater detail than the implications of a grandparent co-residing with the orphans. Children living in parent- or grandparent-headed households have better schooling
outcomes than those in households headed by other relatives or non-relatives (Ainsworth, Beegle, & Koda, 2005). Existing evidence from African settings is that co-residence with a grandmother may offer benefits to grandchildren. Ethnographic research from Sierra Leone indicates that grandmothers are thought to be good carers of children because they “love and pamper their small charges” (Bledsoe & Brandon, 1992, p. 290). They are assumed to be less likely than other women to discriminate against children because their own are no longer at home competing for food (Parker & Short, 2009).

The Children in Distress Network in South Africa proposed an amendment to section 136 of the Children’s Amendment Bill, which required the adult supervision of child-headed households, with the following comment: “Section 136, to enable child-headed households to access social services.” The bill further suggested the involvement of child-headed household members in the running of their households under a mentor (neighbour or social worker), depending on age and maturity of the children. The clause allows for a mentor to assist child-headed households, which should be a relief for children overburdened by adult responsibilities and who consequently fail to perform in, or drop out of school. The inclusion of a clause that ensures that the mentor be held accountable is a good initiative, however there is a need to include a clause that allows children in the household recourse if the mentor is no longer acting in their best interest (Roth, Lindley & Ashley, 2011).

### 2.4.3 Peer support

Orphans need a sense of belonging and to feel welcomed among their peers. Child-headed orphans like to be among friends who understand their roles and responsibilities but still treat them as their equals. Friends will bring out the child in them and have time to play and laugh, away from their daily duty of taking care of siblings. Social isolation of orphans heading the family by peers has a negative impact on orphans (Roth et al., 2011). Children who are acting as carers may no longer be perceived as children because they have stepped into an adult role. According to the UNICEF website (2006, as cited in Roth et al., 2011, p.78):
In Zimbabwe, orphans in child-headed households were asked about how they are treated. Many children heading households reported that they are made to feel like outsiders from the local community and from relatives and treated very badly. The older girls reported that community members no longer treated them as children, even though they treated other girls of the same age with parents as children. The community now saw these girls as "mothers" and expected them to work hard to care for their younger brothers and sisters, as a result, the girls had no friends except those who were also heading child-headed households (cited in Roth et al., 2011).

2.4.4 Community centres

Many families in AIDS-affected communities rely heavily on social grants. In some areas, faith-based, community-based, and NGOs also provide food and other essential services (Madhavan, 2004). However, increasing number of orphans and endemic poverty are placing these support systems under strain, which means that little attention is paid to psychosocial issues such as bereavement and loss (Davids & Skinner, 2006). Programmes and services to child-headed households are structured through legislation, policies and procedures, but are operationalised and implemented by professional caregivers; community leaders; community-based organisations; non-profit organisations; faith-based organisations and volunteers, family members, neighbours, social structures and friends. Many of these stakeholders are in need of the necessary knowledge, skills and finances to effectively support child-headed households (Human & Van Rensburg, 2011).

2.5 SUMMARY

The literature review orientated an understanding of the unique context of the phenomenon of child-headed households in the South African context and how it has emerged. Child-headed Orphans were defined and discussed, through studies by other researchers.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Mouton (2005, p.55) explains research design as a ‘plan or blueprint’ of how the researcher intends to conduct the research. It includes a description of the research methodology, specifying how the researcher intends conducting field work and the data collection process and procedures used. This study followed a qualitative research approach, with the psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 orphans from child-headed households explored and described. It was a phenomenological case study involving a purposive sample of Grade 7 learners from child-headed household to determine their psycho-educational experiences.

3.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH APPROACH AND PURPOSE

Qualitative research methodology is concerned with understanding the process and the social and cultural contexts which underlie various behavioural patterns. It typically studies people or systems by interacting with and observing the participants in their natural environment and focusing on their meanings and interpretations. The Grade 7 child-headed orphans in this study were observed in a non-threatening and supportive setting and the researcher interacted with them during interviews. The emphasis was on the quality and depth of information rather than on the scope or breadth of the information provided in quantitative research (Maree, 2010). This study provided insight into the experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans from a primary school in Soweto. It was descriptive of psycho-educational experiences and the support programmes of the orphans (Mouton, 2005).
3.2.1 Exploratory research

The term ‘exploratory’ implies that research is being done on a relatively unknown topic so that the topic can be explored and information gathered, to be interpreted by systematically analysing the data and coding it into themes (Mouton & Marais, 1990, p.45). Exploratory design is used when the researcher first needs to explore a topic using qualitative data then measures or tests it qualitatively (Maree, 2010). This design is therefore appropriate when studying a topic in which no theory exists or when a researcher does not know which constructs are appropriate or how to measure important variables (Maree, 2010).

Exploratory research is usually conducted in new areas of inquiry, therefore qualitative exploratory studies often examine phenomena that have not been studied previously (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). According to Bless and Higson (1995, as cited in De Vos, Delport, Fouche, & Strydom, 2002, p.109), exploratory research is conducted to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual.

Qualitative research is concerned with discovering new literature and new insights into the research topic. A qualitative design is used if current literature indicates deficiencies in the area of interest (De Vos, 1998). This study assisted the support structures to check available resources in order to support the orphans. Human beings are constantly in the process of creating meaning, which shapes the way they view others, the world and themselves. It provides a framework through which the world makes sense. Qualitative research aims to explore these constructions in order to view individual worlds through their eyes (Gubrium & Sankar, 1994). From the observations, interviews and life essays the researcher explored their experiences and viewed the world through their eyes.

3.2.2 Descriptive research

The research require an accurate and detailed description of the theme. Qualitative research aims to explore, describe and understand an individual's experiences and life-world through descriptive processes. The experience that has to be interpreted must be described in order to arrive at a better understanding of
the experience. Obtaining insight and understanding is an interaction process, and “…requires that one is able to enter, or take the point of view of another’s experience” (Denzin, 1989, p.120).

The process consists of research aimed at eliciting the participants’ understandings of their world through in-depth exploration of their meanings, experiences and perceptions. It produces descriptive data in the participants’ own written or spoken words, and thus involves identifying their beliefs, values, attitudes and cognitive processes, as they underlie the phenomenon (Creswell, 1994; Kvale, 1983; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Due to the nature of the topic, the researcher needed to go deep into perceptions, emotions and feelings of the participants in order to gain an understanding of how they describe their experience of being exposed to child-headed households (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.2.3 Contextual research

Qualitative research seeks to represent the participants’ frames of reference and contexts (Gubrium & Sankar, 1994). This research aimed to explore and describe the experiences of orphans living in child-headed households in Soweto in order to stimulate sensitivity to their plight, special needs and rights. Furthermore, the research aim was to establish psycho-educational support to assist the orphans in coping with the effects of their situation and so facilitate their psychological wellbeing. These experiences will be analysed by reconstructing the information and staying close to the subject and participants (Mouton, 1996).

An essential construct of qualitative research is the concept of ‘holism’ based on Gestalt theory (Reber, 1985, p.301), in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This means that the context is essential in order to understand the phenomenon of the Grade 7 child-headed orphans. The researcher therefore aimed to collect sufficient data about the subject and the context within which they were operating (Mouton & Marais, 1990).
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was based on inductive reasoning, with the data that has been generated giving rise to relationships and patterns discovered through close scrutiny. The data was analysed and interpreted by means of inductive abstraction and generalisation (De Vos, 1998), to reveal what the child-headed orphans were experiencing and open channels for further research and the development of support programmes.

The researcher made use of a phenomenological research design in order to understand and interpret how human beings construct and give meaning to their experiences and everyday lives, within their contexts (De Vos, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The researcher entered the participants' lived experiences through interviews, life essays and observations, analysing the conversations and interacting with them (De Vos, 1998).

3.3.1 Case study design

Yin (1984, in Maree, 2010, p. 75), defines the 'case study' research method as empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. From the interpretivist perspective, the typical characteristic of case studies is that they strive towards a comprehensive understanding of how participants relate and interact in a specific situation and how they make meaning of the phenomenon under study. A phenomenological multiple case study design, because it had more than one participant (three girls and two boys), was used to investigate the lived psycho-educational experiences of the learners in question (Giorgi, 1985; McMillan & Schumacher, 2011; Groenewald, 2004; Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009).

This research study is a psychological and educational case study because it focused on the individual as a way to investigate some aspects of human behaviour and their psychological and educational experiences. In education, a case study of an individual might be guided by a psychological theory (Merriam,
1998). This research attempted to explore the psychological and educational experiences of the participating orphans and the support programmes provided at their school. The psychological theory underpinning the study was Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory as introduced and outlined in Chapters One and Two.

A case study approach has been criticised for potential bias, however, this can be minimised if the researcher spends enough time in the field, employing multiple data collection strategies to obtain data from different perspectives. Extensive time spent during the process of data collection allows the researcher to corroborate it and identify misinterpreted information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The process of triangulation, i.e., obtaining multiple perspectives, enhances the research inquiry's validity and reliability.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research method is a tool used to conduct doing research, whether procedure or instrument to investigate, generate and analyse data (Locke, Spirduso & Silverman, 2000). The research method utilised is directly connected to the problem statement and goal of research, which with the research strategy comprises skills, assumption and practices. Research strategies are merely tools to achieve a specific end, namely to capture the meaning that people bring to their world within a qualitative paradigm. A constructive interpretive research paradigm focused on the orphans' psycho-educational experiences and experiences of support programmes at their school (Maree, 2010).

3.4.1 Purposive sampling

According to Maree (2010, p.79), purposive sampling means selecting participants according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question. The sample size may or may not be fixed prior to data collection, and very often depends on the resources and time available to the researcher. To counter the threat of being flawed, purposive sample size should rather be determined on the
basis of theoretical saturation. Purposive sampling is therefore most successful when data review and analysis are carried out in conjunction with data collection.

Five Grade 7 child-headed orphans formed part of the sample that was purposively selected. The following criteria were used for selection of participants:

- They were orphans from child-headed households.
- They were in Grade 7 in a particular school identified for this study (*Kgola-thuto primary school in Soweto).
- They were three girls and two boys.
- Their ages were ranged from 12 to 14
- They were black South Africans from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds
- Their home languages were Setswana and Sepedi
- They chose their pseudonyms for anonymity and to protect their identity.

All of the above represented different ethnic, gender, language and age groups of Grade 7 learners in a primary school.

3.4.2 Data collection methods

Semi-structured individual interviews, focus group interviews and life essays were used to explore the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans. The psycho-educational support programmes for child-headed orphans were explored.

3.4.2.1 Semi-structured individual interview

In social research there are many types of interviews, but for the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised, perhaps the most common form of interview used in qualitative research (Dawson, 2006). In this type of interview the researcher wishes to know certain information which can be weighed against and contrasted with that obtained in other interviews. To do this, identical questions
are asked in each interview, however, the researcher also wished the interview to remain flexible so that other important information could still arise (Dawson, 2006). Terreblanche and Kelly, (1999) indicated that semi-structured interviews are less formal, more flexible and useful for gaining insight into people’s personal beliefs and perceptions (Smith, 1996). They provide an opportunity to get to know people closely and gain insight into how they feel and think. Although they were implemented with the assistance of a guiding set of questions, the questions did not indicate or control the flow of the interview (Smith, 1996). The interviewer’s role in the semi-structured interviews is paramount, as he or she is responsible for the collection and analysis of data, which compels him or her to develop skills such as empathy and listening (Terreblanche & Kelly, 1999). This type of interview method is valuable when dealing with complex emotional processes and personal issues (Smith, 1996).

3.4.2.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted with five Grade 7 child-headed orphans, selected because they shared something in common (Rodrigues & Rodrigues, 2003). A group interview could provide insight into social processes that enable the researcher to receive a wide range of responses during one meeting and ask questions of each other, lessening the impact of researcher bias. Moore (2000) asserts that in-depth interviews allow the participants to talk in detail about their viewpoints and experiences.

3.4.2.3 Life essays (stories)

Grade 7 orphans were requested to write their psycho-educational experiences of living in a child-headed household. These were analysed, coded into themes and discussed as part of the research findings.
3.4.3 Data analysis methods

Content analysis was used to analyse the themes and recurring patterns of meaning in the transcribed interviews and life essays/stories (Merriam, 1998). The researcher had the opportunity to analyse the data in smaller, more meaningful units that could be grouped into similar, common themes (Henning, 2004), in order to understand and interpret the lived psycho-educational experiences of the child-headed orphans. The researcher kept a record of all data collected during the research, then analysed and coded it into themes using Tesch’s (1990, 142) open coding strategy and descriptive analysis (Cresswell, 1994, p.154). All the information was reduced to themes then interpreted, to understand rather than explain the psycho-educational experiences. The data was coded systematically and the themes emerged, with sub-themes developed and more defined categories and sub-categories constructed from the themes that emerged from the overall process of analyses. The themes from the transcript of individual and focus group interviews were compared with the life essays and stories written by participants. The researcher kept a record of all data collected during the research.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Lincoln and Guba, (1985) define trustworthiness in qualitative research as the aim to support the researcher to report findings that the research is worth paying attention to. The four measures of trustworthiness in a study which need to be adhered to are as follows.

**Credibility** implies how self-assured the researcher is with the truths of the findings based on the research design, participants and the context in which the study was conducted (Nesengani, 2005). This was achieved through **reflexibility** (field notes) and triangulation (interviews with the group and individuals and their life essays/stories) (Pillay, 1996).

**Transferability** was attained through purposive sampling of participants, data collection methods and data analysis methods, and by triangulating the data.
accumulated in order to ensure the applicability of findings (Neuman, 1997; Shenton, 2004; Pillay, 1996).

**Dependability** was established through a dense description of research method, triangulation and analysis of data so that the findings would be consistent (Strauss & Myburgh, 2001; Pillay, 1996).

**Confirmability** was achieved through triangulation (different data collection methods), reflexivity (Field notes) and with the guidance of the supervisor of this study (Pillay, 1996). The evidence supporting the logic of the researcher’s argument was gathered (Strauss & Myburgh, 2001).

### 3.6 ETHICS

According to Stinger (2007), ethical procedures are an important part of all research processes, and formal research institutions such as universities have rules and regulations covering the conduct of the research. This arises because researchers in the past have engaged in forms of inquiry that have put participants at risk through unwittingly or carelessly revealing information that puts them in situations that are unsafe (Stringer, 2007). In this section, ethical measures that were taken were discussed to make sure that no participants would be harmed in any way. Accessing child-headed households was a complex process which involved obtaining consent from adults, notably the principal, community centre and organisations.

After the proposal was accepted by the University Higher Degrees Committee, consent was granted by the participants involved in this research. Ethical considerations began with the submission of a proposal outlining the research to the Faculty Ethics Committee and receipt of ethical clearance (see Appendix A). The letter from the DoE and the principal allowing the research to take place and to show that the study complies with the standard ethical considerations and confidentiality clause are attached (see Appendix B). The principal and the managing director of *Sizanani* community centre (NGO) signed the consent letters for all the participants (see Appendices C and D) and acted in *loco parentis*. All the participants signed the assent forms (see Appendix E).
Rubin and Rubin (1998) regard research ethics as acquiring and disseminating trustworthy information in ways that do not cause harm to the participants. Ethical obligations require avoiding deception by asking permission to record, and being honest about the intended use of the research. The participants chose pseudonyms to protect their identity and all the records and life essays are kept safe to maintain confidentiality.

It was important that the researcher provide clear information for participants, so that they may be clear about the activities in which they engage, prior to signing consent/assent forms (see Appendix E) and engaging in them (Masondo, 2006). The participants were informed from the start of the study that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. No names were used in any transcriptions, in order to protect privacy and identity (Pillay & Nesengani, 2006).

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has described the research methodology that was followed when conducting this study and the research design which assisted the researcher to explore the lived psycho-educational experiences of the child-headed orphans in Grade 7. Purposive sampling was discussed and the data collection methods thereof. The method of analysis was described and adherence to ethical guidelines assured.
CHAPTER FOUR
DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a detailed and integrated understanding of the data presented and contributed by the participants. Individuals may have different interpretations of the same experience, for as stated by Walliman (2005, p.17) “we experience our world through our perceptions which are influenced by our preconceptions and beliefs”. It is noted that participants in this study are only representative of the sample (Lethale, 2005).

The data collected (as discussed in detail in Chapter Three) was analysed, with the individual and focus group interviews recorded, transcribed and coded into the themes. The life essays/stories written by the participants and observations by the researcher were also analysed and coded into the themes. The themes coded from the data collected will be discussed in detail below.

4.2 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

All interviews were audiotaped then transcribed in conjunction with field notes taken by the researcher. The languages used were Setswana and Sepedi since they were the participants' home languages. All participants were African (Black), Setswana and Sepedi-speaking Grade 7 child-headed orphans from a primary school in Soweto. Consent and access to orphans was obtained via the principal of the school and the founder/managing director of Sizanani community centre, an NGO. Permission to conduct interviews was also obtained from the participants themselves, having signed the assent forms (see Appendix E). All were vulnerable teenagers from the ages of 12 to 14, living in child-headed households.
Table 4.1: Profile of Participants from Kgola-thuto Primary School in Soweto Involved in the Focus Group Interviews, Individual Interviews and Life Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Family background</th>
<th>Additional Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Happiness</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Stays with grade 11 sister and they fight a lot</td>
<td>Had not applied for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Precious</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Stays with brother who dropped out of school</td>
<td>Had not applied for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Knew his father after mother’s death but died shortly after that</td>
<td>Had not applied for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>K.G</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Stays in the back yard of a relative</td>
<td>Had applied for high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mamello</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Very bitter about ill-treatment by relatives and prefers to stay with siblings</td>
<td>Had not applied for high school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data sources were coded according to the name of the participant and whether it was a life essay (LE), individual interview, (II) or focus group interview (FG) of the Grade 7 child-headed orphans.

Table 4.2: Data Codes used for Focus Group Interviews, Individual Interviews and Life Essays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Type</th>
<th>Data Codes</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual interview</td>
<td>Individual interview (II), name of the participant</td>
<td>II- K.G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group interview</td>
<td>Focus group interview (FG)</td>
<td>FG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Essay</td>
<td>Life essay (LE), name of the participant</td>
<td>LE- Mamello</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data sources in this study were coded as follows:
The primary school chosen for the study was situated in Soweto and given the pseudonym of *Kgola-thuto primary school to protect the identity of the participants. Each interview as well as the recordings of the participants were transcribed verbatim. The observation notes were for supporting purposes and have not being analysed in detail. The raw data was thoroughly and systematically analysed, coded and categorised into themes, keeping the research question in mind (Henning et al., 2004, in Taggart, 2008, p.83). Themes and codes emerged as the researcher worked at sentence and phrase level to identify relevant codes. After writing codes, different coloured highlights were used to group them into categories to present the themes emerging. The lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans were discussed within the bio-ecological systems model as a theoretical framework.

4.2.1 Researcher’s Observation

In the first meeting with the participants, the girls arrived at the venue on time and kept quiet in anticipation to hear the purpose of the meeting while the boys were running around and not keen on attending the meeting. After clarifying the purpose of the research and building rapport the boys honoured the time for all the meetings. All the participants were eager to be involved in the research process in order to assist the researcher as much as possible. They wished to know what was going to happen when the research was completed. The researcher’s observation was that the participants were in need of help that would address their needs. Some were well looked after while some were untidy and wearing tattered school uniform. Some were emotional when they wrote their life essays. As a student educational psychologist the researcher contained the emotions of the learners after each session and they were given a child-line telephone number to call whenever they wanted to talk about their problems. Two follow-up visits were made after the collection of data to ensure that they were coping.
4.2.2 Semi-structured individual interview

The semi-structured individual interviews were compiled according to the research topic and research question. All the participants were asked similar questions (see Appendix F). The interviews with the participants were recorded and transcribed, then data was categorised and analysed according to the themes and sub-themes of the psycho-educational experiences and the support programmes. The participants were using their home languages (Setswana and Sepedi) but their answers were very brief and the follow-up questions were asked by the researcher to seek clarity or elicit more information.

4.2.3 Semi-structured focus group interview

The focus group interview questions were compiled in manner similar to the individual interviews (see Appendix G). All the participants were asked similar questions and each given the chance to voice their views. The interviews with the focus group were recorded and transcribed then the data was categorised and analysed according to the themes and sub-themes of the psycho-educational experiences and the support programmes of the Grade 7 child-headed orphans. The participants reserved some sensitive information during the focus group interview and were comfortable talking about them during the individual interviews. For example, ‘Happiness’ and ‘Precious’ did not feel comfortable talking about sibling rivalry during the focus group interview but they were able to talk about it during the individual interviews. The sister who did not want to take care of younger siblings during the group interview disclosed information about sibling fights in individual interviews. All the participants were able to talk about their performance in different learning areas in individual interviews but not the focus group interviews.

4.2.4 Life essays/stories

The participants were requested to write life essays/stories. It was a free writing of their psycho-educational experiences and they were requested to write in any
language with which they felt comfortable. The purpose of life essays was to give them an opportunity to tell their story and experiences as child-headed orphans.

4.3 DISCUSSION OF THEMES

The findings are discussed in detail in this chapter and the researcher presented the voice of the participants and the meaning of their reality. The researcher discussed her understanding of the findings and supported them with literature and Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory as the framework. The learners were communicating in Setswana and Sepedi, and the researcher translated the life essays and interview comments into English without changing the meaning of their experiences. As a researcher I am Sesotho-speaking and was able to capture and translate their comments.

According to Plug, Meyer, Louw and Gouws (1989), experience involves undergoing an activity and accumulating knowledge based on learning and practice as well as taking in authentic activities. In totality, it refers to the direct observed content of the conscious mind at the specific and given time (Leatham, 2005). In the context of this enquiry this implies that the learners have shared their knowledge and meaning of their lived experiences as they have undergone certain real-life experiences within the child-headed family context.

The psycho-educational experiences of the Grade 7 child-headed orphans were discussed in detail using quotes and reference from the data collected in order to support the findings. Each interview, as well as the written life essay by each participant, was transcribed verbatim. The observation notes served as supporting documents and were not analysed in detail. The raw data was systematically analysed, coded and categorised into themes.

After writing all codes the researcher used coloured highlighters to group the emerging categories, presenting themes that were constructed from the data to be discussed within the findings. Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory was used as a framework to guide the discussion of findings where applicable. The participants were Grade 7 learners from child-headed households, and they were
from *Kgola-thuto primary school in Soweto. They were all Africans (Black), Setswana and Sepedi speaking.

Table 4.3 (below) is a summary of themes and sub-themes that emerged after the analysis of findings. The two major themes are psychological experiences, educational experiences and support programmes offered at school and in the community. The findings were discussed by presenting the voice of the participants and supported by the theory, existing literature and the voice of the researcher where necessary.

Table 4.3: The Overall Profile of Findings as Themes and Sub-themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1: Psychological Experiences</th>
<th>Theme 2: Educational Experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sub-theme 1: Emotional Challenges</td>
<td>1. Sub-theme 1: Academic Challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Grief and Loss</td>
<td>a) Performance in Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Anger</td>
<td>b) School Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Sadness</td>
<td>c) Value of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Trust</td>
<td>d) Transition to High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Need for Love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Worry due to Lack of Basic needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1 Theme 1: Psychological experiences

This enquiry explored the psychological experiences of the Grade 7 child-headed orphans. The following findings will be discussed in detail below: emotional challenges, such as grief and loss, anger, sadness, trust and need for love. To avoid repetition the support programmes are integrated in the findings. The role of the School Based Support Team (SBST), District Based Support Team (DBST), community, peers and NGOs, and available support programmes for Grade 7 child-headed orphans were discussed to highlight the nature of support given. The overview of support programmes is as follows:
The School Based Support Team (SBST) is the hub of the process of identification, support and referral for students with individual needs. Monitoring student progress and referring to district services or outside agencies encouraging teachers and parents to try alternative strategies, recommending referral for consultation or assessment beyond the school level, evaluating team functioning, and speaking out for students when others have given up, are some of the core duties of the SBST (Dissel & Labuschagne, 2009). They refer learners to the DBST for further intervention and support.

The District Based Support Team (DBST) consists of all role players in support, including the learning area specialists (subject advisors). The role of the DBST is to support educators and give them strategies on how to support learners with learning barriers. The learner’s performance is measured against the set standards during assessment. The DoE (1998, in Landsberg et al., 2005, p.46) defines assessment as “the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner’s achievement, as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for particular phase of learning”. Upon the receipt of referral forms of learners with learning barriers the DBST’s psychologists conduct psychological assessment to identify gaps and plan for support.

Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs), according to Dhlomo (2001) should lead the process of reviving extended family units. In African cultural traditions it is seen as shameful and undignified to have children turn to strangers for help while parents’ sisters and brothers become bystanders. The Sizanani community centre served as a safe haven for child-headed orphans participating in this study. It offered daily meal and clothes to vulnerable children and the needy and sick community members.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Emotional Challenges

Sub-theme 1 had a number of components.
4.3.1.1 Grief and Loss

The Grade 7 child-headed orphans were still grieving the loss of their parents, as evident when Precious wrote in the life essay, “I miss my parents” (Precious LE), and confirmed by Happiness (LE), who also wrote in her life essay that she missed her parents but that “I miss my father most”. The clear indication that the orphans missed their parents was that they still remembered when they had died. Precious, in an individual interview, indicated that “I was young when they pass on” (Precious II) and seemed to be emotional when she talked about the death of her parents.

They experienced different emotions due to the loss of their parents, with KG (LE) saying: “…feel bad about the death of my mother”. The Grade 7 child-headed orphans shared their experiences of life without their parents as they still remembered how it was when their parents were still alive. Man could not hide his emotions when he was sharing his life experience in an individual interview that “life was good before my parents pass away” (II-Man). Precious shared an experience with other participants when she wrote in her life essay that “life was right” before her parents died (Precious- LE).

Although the have lost the significant people in their lives it was hard to accept the loss and change in their lives. These learners did not want to be different, and Man confirmed this when he indicated in the individual interview that he wanted to “…be like other kids who have parents” (II-Man). The Grade 7 child-headed orphans were very emotional when they were talking about their parents, which showed that it was very hard to come to terms with the loss of their loved ones.

The loss of parents produces intense feelings of vulnerability, loneliness, emptiness and a desire for a fulfilling life. A time comes in the lives of orphans in child-headed families when they wish their parents were still around. They feel life could have been much different if their parents were still alive. The death of parents forces young people to take increased adult responsibilities for which they are not ready (Masondo, 2006). Death of a parent aggravates the shock and anxiety of children, as they worry about who would care for them after the parent’s death (Masondo, 2006).
According to Van Dyk (2008), bereavement can be defined as the experience of pain and grief felt when a person loses someone or something of value. People can grieve the loss of many things that are important to them, such as the death of the loved one. The needs to be met by families are emotional, social, financial, and educational (Moletsane, 2004).

Orton (1997) indicated that children whose growth needs were met by parents before their death would make a better adjustment than those who suffer from developmental deficits associated with maternal deprivation. Therefore, a child’s adjustment to the death of a parent is dependent not only on individual differences in temperament and style of coping but also on the child’s perception of the quality of the relationship with both deceased and surviving parent.

Although Kgola-thuto primary school had an SBST the school did not follow the internal and external processes of referring learners with the emotional challenges to the DBST for further intervention. The learners were only referred to Sizanani community centre for further support.

4.3.1.1.2 Anger

The life essays gave the Grade 7 child-headed orphans an opportunity to voice their anger at the death of their parents. Some directed their anger to a divine being, for instance Happiness, who wrote, “I wish that God didn’t take them away from me… will not take my sisters away from me too”. Precious combined her anger at losing parents with the anger that her sister could not take care of her because she was married. On the other hand, she could not relocate to stay with her as she indicated in the life essay that “I think God don’t love my sister because she has three children and my brother did not finish school and he is not working” (Precious-LE).

The child-headed orphans experience various emotions, such as sadness, pain, fright and anger (Leatham, 2005). According to Van Dyk (2008), the bereaved are angry at the deceased because they have left them. Anger is a universal emotional response to a frustrating situation and can be expressed as aggression,
jealousy and rivalry (Orton, 1997). Although anger may seem inappropriate, and in many cases comes unexpectedly to the grieving person, it is the most basic reaction to a significant loss (Van Dyk, 2008).

The SBST is supported by the district officials from the DoE who are part of the DBST. The district team consists of inclusion specialists, counsellors and educational psychologists. Upon the receipt of referral from the school the district plans a visit to the school for further support. The findings in this study indicated that no learners were referred for further intervention or emotional support.

4.3.1.1.3 Sadness

The Grade 7 child-headed orphans expressed their sadness due to the death of their parents or ill-treatment by peers. During the individual interview, Precious indicated that “I feel sad when other children talk about their parents” (Precious-II). She also mentioned that classmates did not treat her well because of her preference of friends “they accuse me of loving the boys” and she said she did not like to be with girls because “girls like to gossip” (II-Precious). The death of her parents left her devastated and sad as she hoped to get so much from them: “I thought I will experience happy things in my life from my parents” (Precious-LE).

Man was very emotional when expressing his sadness about how other children can be mean to orphans: “At school they tease me and say I don’t bath and it makes me sad” (II-Man). When experiencing emotional challenges some used different ways to cope, one indicating that, “Emotionally I am not well” (II-Precious) but making jokes and playing games helped her to “forget the sad things that have happened to me” (II-Precious).

According to Borman and Rose (2010), teachers should provide a supportive environment that allows learners to discuss their negative emotions. They further indicated that teachers are not trained as psychologists, but may face constraints if the psychologist is not deployed for further intervention. Teachers can also influence attitudes and be part of the process of the growing knowledge and skills alongside other stakeholders and the community.
Bullying and ill-treatment by other learners is on the increase in schools. No support was given to these learners by the school or the district to address the emotional challenges or to improve their self-esteem that might be dented by ill-treatment by peers.

4.3.1.1.4 Trust

Much as they have expressed their sadness at ill-treatment by peers, the orphans still had people with whom they could trust and talk about their challenges. Precious would: “talk to my eldest sister when I visit her during school holidays” (Precious-II) while some chose not to talk about their problems. KG said “I don’t talk to anyone when I have problems. I keep it to myself” (KG-II). Although they expressed their anger at ‘God’, these orphans still had hope and trust in a divine being: “I always pray hard to God to help me change my life” (Precious-LE). Most orphans said their classmates treated them well. Precious indicated that when she was with friends “we talk about issues and they encourage me to read” (II-Precious) which shows that they still have the trust and support from their peers. Most orphans indicated that their classmates treated them well and that it strengthened their trust.

In a life essay one participant indicated how he would like to change his life to be a better person and contribute positively “to help people like me….I will change the country to be the best country” (Man-LE). When the basic needs of some of these learners were met it made them feel happy and it improved their psychological wellbeing.

Some of the learners only relied on the support offered by peers who were trusted to them, as the school did not refer to a district psychologist for formal psychological intervention in order to assist those who lacked trust in teachers, peers or community members.
4.3.1.1.5 Need for love

In the life essays, KG wrote about how it felt to be a child without a mother, but he still felt his mother's love: "I love my mother and I know she loves me" (KG-LE). The need to be loved was further confirmed by Happiness when she made mention of his father's love: "my father loved me so much he didn't want my mother to punish me" (Happiness-LE). In the individual interview KG expressed how the support and love from peers and community "makes me feel happy" (II-KG). All the participants indicated that they felt happy when they received support from teachers, peers, community and NGOs, and they seemed to associate support with love.

Despite Happiness and her sister sometimes fighting, in an individual interview she indicated that "My sister is moody and likes to fight" (II-Happiness), but there were good days where they lived "like sisters" and showed each other love. Orton, (1997) found that sibling rivalry may manifest as a classic struggle between sisters for the affection of their parents and position of favour within the family. It is deeply rooted in human nature, present in varying degrees in most cultures and may continue into adulthood. The role carers play in providing children with unconditional love is transferred to the children, carrying positive messages about themselves regarding their value and self-worth throughout their lives (Leatham, 2005).

Although the SBST did not refer the child-headed orphans to the DBST or educational psychologists the perceived the support given by the school in the form of food and uniform served as reassurance that they were loved.

4.3.1.1.6 Worry due to lack of basic needs

The child-headed orphans indicated that they became worried when they could not afford to meet basic needs, such as food. Lack of money made them miss their parents, as evident when KG wrote in his life essay that he remembered how he used to have money: "I remember my mother and my father used to give me some money" (KG-LE). Despite lacking money for basic needs, through support
they still got what they needed for survival. Man indicated that “at church they support us” (Man-II) with such basic needs as food and clothes.

Some learners received support from community members. In the individual interview KG showed his gratitude for support that “the neighbour helps us with food” (KG-II). Man shared the same appreciation by indicating that during the extramural activities at school his friends shared what they had with him. Man indicated that he liked to play football, and other learners “borrow me soccer boots and buy me food when they are buying for themselves” (II-Man).

Money is an important commodity for survival, and prolonged financial strain will begin to influence the quality and emotional reactions among family members (Leatham, 2005). Although initiatives are launched by social development and the DoE in an attempt to alleviate the socio-economic strain child-headed families have to endure, the viewpoints and authentic experiences could inform possible additional support measures to adhere to their specific basic needs (Leatham, 2005). According to Maslow (1970, in Landsberg et al., 2005) the first four basic needs of life (oxygen, water, food and shelter) are vital and deficiency can lead to physical problems.

Orton (1997) describes worry as a specific, less intense form of fear that involves imaginary danger, what the future may have in store and apprehension about what has happened or what might happen. The study included the Grade 7 child-headed orphan’s psychological experiences and their worries about the lack of money for food and household goods. The Grade 7 orphans assumed the role of parents by planning ahead and worried when they were not sure or did not know who would assist them when the food was finished.

Although they indicated that they were worried about their basic needs all the Grade 7 child-headed orphans were aware of the feeding scheme at their school and of the childcare grant they were receiving from the government. They took a meal at school and it was very important for the community to continue with support so that they could focus on their homework.

The Sizanani community centre, an NGO based in Orlando east, Soweto, offers support to the local community, including orphans and vulnerable children.
Learners from *Kgola-thuto primary received daily meals, food parcels and clothes. There was a social worker based at the centre who made home visits. Happiness indicated that they could go to the centre when they needed food and clothes. The researcher also visited the centre and found that they not only took care of the orphans but also extended support to vulnerable community.

The findings indicated that when some of the parents died they left the orphans in the family house, and this added to their challenges because they were already thinking about the worst that could happen to them. During the interview Happiness indicated that her parents left them in the family house and she wished that her sister could work and “buy us a house” because their uncle could come back and “evict us anytime” (II-Happiness).

According to Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005, p.31):

> Children as young as three years sometimes live in the streets because they have no one to take care of them. Research project conducted at school indicated that children as young as 14 and 15 often act as heads of households. They have to provide for the basic needs of siblings without income - often without housing, water and electricity.

Communities in South Africa differ widely in terms of their values and available resources, contributing significantly to social and interpersonal interactions and problems (Donald et al., 2002, p.239). Communities have particular values which influence their everyday interactions. A bio-ecosystemic approach to support required a multi-disciplinary team to tackle the issue of housing. No support was given to the orphans, nor had the social workers started to plan for alternative accommodation should the uncle decide to evict them.

### 4.3.2 Theme 2: Educational experiences

During the focus group interview the Grade 7 child-headed orphans were asked about the subjects that they were taking (see Appendix H) and their performance in them. The Grade 7 subjects were Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), Natural science (NS), Mathematics, Technology, Social science (SS), Life
orientation (LO), Arts and culture (A&C) English and Home language (Setswana or Sepedi). Academic challenges will be discussed in detail below. The support programme, such as SBST (including subject teachers), DBST (including subject advisors, inclusion specialists, and educational psychologist), peers, community and NGO will also be integrated in the discussion of findings.

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Academic Challenges

Academic challenges were as follows.

4.3.2.1.1 Performance in Class

During the focus group interview participants indicated that they were struggling with different learning areas and that their performance was not good in some learning areas. Mamello-FG indicated that she was struggling with English but receiving no support from the school. This was evident as the life essay written by Mamello (LE) showed symptoms of a severe learning barrier, as she could not construct sentences or spell correctly. However, Mamello said her performance was fine and she was only struggling with English (Mamello-FG). Man had also indicated that he was struggling with Setswana but differed with Mamello in that teachers taught him and took care of him.

Other participants confirmed that they were struggling in different learning areas; KG (FG) indicated that he was struggling with EMS, Happiness with Maths, and Precious and Man with Setswana. They acknowledged that they received support from the teacher, however, Precious (FG) indicated that her performance was good in other learning areas.

A study conducted by Taggart (2008) indicated that learners from child-headed homes experienced learning difficulties at school. Pillay and Nesengani (2006, p.135) confirmed that “adolescents experienced difficulty with academic achievements as a result of poor concentration, failure to complete educational tasks including the passing of tests and examinations and poor concentration”.

50
In line with whole-school development and creating school community care, Donald et al. (2002) found that the role of the teacher involved being able to identify and address barriers to learning, including specific needs of learners, whilst for Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005, p.28):

> Issues that give rise to severe barriers in the provision of quality education for all the children’s in the country are, the culture of poverty with its resultant deprivation, unemployment, negative expectations of the future and the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its effect on education.

The bio-ecological systems model posits that learning support in principle assumes collaboration of all role players (teachers, psychologists including family and community members), adaptation of curriculum and peer support, and, where required, specialised intervention and counselling (Landsberg et al., 2005).

None of the participants had been referred to the DBST for further intervention or support for learning barriers, even Mamello, who seemed to have serious challenges. However, some indicated that their teachers were supporting them to address their learning challenges.

### 4.3.2.1.2 School needs

The Grade 7 child-headed orphans wanted to be like other children and have a proper uniform for the next school: “I still need uniform for high school” (II-K.G). During the interview sessions with the orphans, Man constantly wore a tattered and untidy uniform and indicated that he was sad when they teased him about that. However, during the focus group interview he said that “the school gives me uniform and food” (Man-II). Man and Happiness confirmed support: “Teachers are treating me well” (II-Man & II-Happiness). From this enquiry learners described their experience of how teachers supported them with necessities such as food (feeding scheme and food parcels) and school uniform, as direct support.

According to Landsberg, Kruger and Nel (2005:p.28):
…education in the poverty stricken communities of South Africa is hampered by lack of order in the communal structures, language deficiencies, poor orientation towards school and clashes between the value orientations of family and the school.

Books (exercise and textbooks), stationery and educational tours are some of the necessary teaching and learning support material that each learner needs.

Although the SBST did not support the Grade 7 child-headed orphans directly they indicated that their teachers did support them. According to Landsberg et al. (2005), the teacher accommodated the needs of individual learners within the classroom curriculum through specific instructional strategies, supplemented by further support through a virtual network of other role players in the life of the learner. These learners were also supported by peers who borrowed and bought some of the school requirements. The school gave needy learners a school uniform and exempted them from paying for educational trips.

4.3.2.1.3 Value of Education

Although they did not have parents who could guide and support them, Grade 7 child-headed orphans at “Kgola-thuto primary school were adamant about continuing with their education. KG- LE indicated that he liked his teacher, did “want to pass this year and go to high school and then go to matric”, and find himself a job as a policeman. In the life essay and individual interview Precious also showed her determination, saying she would continue to need support until she “finish school and help my sister and my siblings to have better life” (Precious- LE- Precious- II). Her further aspirations, like those of other participants, were to finish school and become a doctor in order to assist orphans. Child-headed orphans have little hope of attaining academic achievements or hope of a prosperous future, and “are so traumatised because of too much responsibility and lethargy as a result of their own basic needs being unmet that they lose all interest in learning” (Landsberg, Kruger & Nel, 2005, p.31).
No support was offered to these learners because the SBST did not refer them to the DBST for career guidance or career assessment by educational psychologists.

### 4.3.2.1.4 Transition to high school

None of the participants but KG had yet applied for high school and they were not sure when they were going to. Happiness and Precious said they did not know when they would apply but remained positive: “my sister promised to bring me forms” (II-Happiness). Precious was also depending on her sister to apply for her as she was also preparing for relocation. Despite not knowing if he was going to pass KG said “I have already applied for high school” (II-KG) and he was also worried about the high school uniform, which showed that he was preparing himself for transition from primary school to high school.

Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen and Fritz (2011) found that despite harshness and the stories of struggle told by orphans they were aspiring to grow up, be educated and find employment which would enable them to improve their families and support their siblings.

Career guidance and motivational talks can assist in preparation for transition from primary to high school. General guidance on how to apply could alleviate the frustration of having to deal with many changes in these orphans’ lives. The school did not offer any support in this regard.

### 4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the results of the lived experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans at *Kgola-thuto primary school in Soweto. The central theme and sub-themes described the participants’ psycho-educational experiences after the loss of their parents. However, there were commonalties amongst the young people who were exposed to the hardships of taking up adult responsibilities at tender ages, when they still needed an opportunity to play and to other things children of their age would normally do. It provided an in-depth description of the
lived psycho-educational experiences of orphans in child-headed households and provided greater understanding and insight into the psycho-educational experience of the participants. The chapter detailed their self-sacrifice, emotional turmoil, role changes and their increased responsibilities, their needs and the problems they encountered. It also provided a perspective on the formal and informal support systems present at school and in the community and from the NGOs.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary, limitations and description of the guidelines and recommendations for psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans at Kgola-thuto primary school in Soweto. The objectives at the beginning of this study were to explore and describe the psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 learners who are orphans in a child-headed home. It also looked at the support programmes for Grade 7 child-headed orphans in the primary school. It is hoped that the findings of this research study will make a positive contribution to the lives of Grade 7 child-headed orphans by helping educational psychologists and all role players both at school and in the community to develop and strengthen the existing support programmes that will meet their psychological and educational needs.

The following section is a summary of the research study and the findings of this inquiry, followed by recommendations that have been formulated to assist all the role players (educators, educational psychologists) in developing the support strategies for orphans. These recommendations have been based upon the results of the study. Limitations and recommendations for future research are also listed.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY

This study was conceptualized within Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological systems theory and has attempted to explore the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans at Kgola-thuto primary school in Soweto. This was in order to explore the psychological and educational experiences of these learners and to substantiate their experiences of supporting programmes both at school and in the community. The results were intended to assist all the stakeholders, including teachers, school counsellors and educational
psychologists to develop support strategies for orphans and to maximise their psychological wellbeing.

The original contribution of this inquiry has been to explore the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 orphans in child-headed households and the support programmes available at the school. It highlighted the grief and loss, sadness and anger due to the loss of their parents, and explored their experiences of the support they received from the school and community. It has also highlighted their future needs, such as money for a school uniform for high school.

From the findings, this study has successfully been able to fulfil the research objective as initially stated in Chapter One, which was to explore the psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 orphans and the support programmes available at their school. The inquiry has informed the researcher about their lived experiences and how living without parents has affected their psychological and emotional wellbeing, as well as their performance in class and transition from primary to high school. Consequently, it showed how Grade 7 child-headed orphans, despite experiencing anger, sadness and worry, are still appreciating the support offered to them.

It has been established that although they appreciate the support by teachers, community and NGOs they still require emotional support to deal with the loss of their parents; hence the intervention by school counsellors or educational psychologists is highly recommended. They also require intervention from teachers about their challenges in the specific learning areas.

The role of the NGOs did not receive much attention at the school, yet their role in supporting vulnerable children is of great importance and should be addressed within community projects. Finally, the DBST with the district educational psychologists could play a significant role in training SBST members to identify and support bereaved learners. The SBST can also be capacitated in basic counselling skills. The DBST can train the SBST on the internal and external referral processes to district educational psychologist and learning area facilitators. With these strategies the psychological and educational needs of the
learners can be met by equipping and empowering educators with the skills to offer the relevant support.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In validating the findings presented in this inquiry, related recommendations are made. The aim is to propose strategies that may enhance the psycho-educational support of Grade 7 child-headed orphans in primary schools as their numbers are on the rise. The schools need more support from the DoE and NGOs working with orphans and vulnerable children. Recommendations are based on psychological experiences, including grief and loss, sadness, trust and the need for love, to be discussed in detail below. Worry due to lack of money, academic performance, value for education, transition from primary to high school and support programmes will also be highlighted.

5.3.1 Psychological experiences

Orphans in child-headed households require emotional support to deal with grief and loss, anger, sadness, a need for love and moral support from peers and community, and support, to address challenges in academic performance. They also require professional counselling. Some are very emotional because they are not receiving parental love and have not yet dealt with the loss of parents, so they require love or support. They need parental guidance when applying for high school or some adult presence. According to Ayieko (1997), the death of a father deprives children of male authority, a status symbol in many communities. However, the subsequent death of a mother further deprives children of crucial emotional and mental security.

_Grief and loss:_ Children’s mental health is an important though neglected aspect. Counselling at school is potentially critical for orphans living in child-headed households and other vulnerable children, and should be used to ensure their adequate growth and development. The wellbeing of such children needs to be prioritised and a bio-ecological systems approach should be implemented to
ensure the strong functional integration of the roles of service providers at district level so that more can be achieved with available resources. Most importantly, educational psychologists are needed to work in multidisciplinary teams.

Anger caused by death of parents can be dealt with through therapy sessions with educational psychologist or school counsellor. The SBST needs to be guided on how to refer learners with emotional challenges or alternatively school counsellors or educational psychologists need to be placed at schools or in a cluster of schools.

Sadness: Peers subject orphans to teasing and discrimination. This needs to be addressed through information and education. The Human rights Commission may be resourceful in assisting schools and communities with information and education pertaining to equality rights. According to Masondo (2006), schools can play a significant role in giving care and support to orphans who are in distress. By displaying willingness to assist, even if only by giving emotional support, the educator can alleviate much stress, however, psychological support or counselling is recommended.

Trust: According to Beddy (2011), a few reasons for participants choosing not to disclose the sensitive information to friends was that some did not trust friends completely and were therefore hesitant about revealing personal information to them. Grade 7 child-headed orphans need people they can trust with whom to share their problems and schools are encouraged to create a safe environment and protect the right to privacy of the orphans so that they can share their burden without fear of embarrassment of stigmatisation. The school counsellors and educational psychologists are obliged to create safe environment for child-headed orphans to confide with trust.

Need for Love: The school also needs to be sensitised to help Grade 7 child-headed orphans to deal with their unique life challenges on a practical and emotional level by being available and willing to provide a loving, caring and supportive environment. A clear advocacy programme should be carried out to ensure that orphans, especially those living in child-headed household, are supported and this advocacy must be carried out by the DoE.
There is a need for more proactive and decisive government intervention that specifically targets orphans and other vulnerable children. Educators are already overloaded with responsibilities, such as preparing lessons and activities, marking assignments and tests, extra-curricular activities, and are not always able to assist orphans and vulnerable children with counselling and guidance. However teachers play a major role because these learners are identified by them. SBST can also play a meaningful role in giving care and support to orphans who are in distress. Care and support lies within the heart of each educator. By displaying a willingness to assist, even if it is only by giving emotional support, the educator can alleviate much stress.

5.3.2 Worry due to lack of basic needs

The SBST could start a special project for learners from child-headed households in which they are taught to raise funds and handle their monthly social grants. The orphans would be equipped with the skills to budget and cover the household needs with the money they receive from the government. The project could also help them to generate more money to meet some financial needs.

Although school uniforms are donated by different companies, organisations and volunteers in the primary school for learners who are needy, the high schools could also support its needy learners with a school uniform through the guidance of the SBST. They could encourage learners to donate outgrown and old but wearable uniform, clothes and shoes in order to establish a uniform and clothing bank.

Through advanced technology at high schools, there is an opportunity to market and inform national and international communities via the Internet about the functioning, activities and needs of the school. Those communities and organisations could then sponsor provision of uniforms and additional necessities for learners from child-headed households.

The social workers working with the grade 7 child-headed orphans could assist them with permanent housing, especially those who have been left in their
grandparents’ houses when their parents died, because some participants indicated that the uncle could evict them without notice. From the findings it was evident that orphans prefer to stay in the same area in which their parents left them rather than move, albeit to a place of relative safety. The social workers could ensure that they do not make too many changes in their lives because the death of parents has already disrupted their lives.

5.3.3 Performance in class

The study revealed that many learners have barriers in different learning areas. It is suggested bio-ecological systems approach be implemented so that a collaborative team comprising teachers, learning area facilitators (subject advisors), educational psychologists and inclusion specialist focus on shared support to improve the performance of learners with barriers. Pillay and Nesengani (2006) advised that a collaborative team should be inclusive and focus on shared decision making in governance, planning, delivery and assessment in education.

The White Paper 6 (DoE, 2001) considers inter-sectoral collaboration as of utmost importance in the inclusive education system, as it would provide effective support for all learners. The approach in providing support would follow the bio-ecological systems theory and include all stakeholders, both in the school and in the community, for instance, teachers, and peers. Michael (2001) argues that a policy is needed to ensure that children are cared for within communities and wider family structures. Given the importance of good health, nutrition and cognitive development in childhood, Michael (2001) further argues that government and urban institutions must provide quality service, including education, health, water and sanitation to orphaned and vulnerable children.

Donald et al. (2010) indicated that prevention is the first thrust directed at transforming educational institutions. Elements of social transformation that can help to prevent occurrence of barriers to learning are also taken into account. Providing education support to school, staff, parents and learners is the second thrust, and together these thrusts mean that every level of the system must be
developed to accommodate diversity and to provide supportive teaching and learning environments that address learning barriers.

5.3.4 Transition to high school and value of education

This study has found that children from child-headed families lack guidance as they had no one to give them a sense of direction. However, it also found that the participants had a very strong inclination to want to continue with their schooling and would remain at school for as long as it was feasible to do so. They appeared to be far more conscious of the value of education in ensuring a better future for them and would battle against all odds to remain at school.

A clear advocacy programme to ensure that orphans, especially those living in child-headed households, are taken care of must be driven forcefully by the DOE and the process of applying to high school should be made easier, and in time for them to find space at the desired high schools. Inter-sectoral collaboration is important in dealing with issues of orphans in child-headed households. There is a need to support community schools and other innovative forms of educational provision for orphaned and disadvantaged children.

5.3.5. Support structures at school and in the community

The SBST has to be empowered to assist the grade 7 child-headed orphans and follow the support programmes that cater for learners’ psychological and educational needs. Through the support of the DBST the educational psychologist can be invited to workshop the SBST on support strategies that can be implemented to improve the wellbeing of the orphans. In addition to this support, the case management by multi-disciplinary team (including educational psychologist, social worker and teachers) is necessary to support the educational needs and the psychological wellbeing of the child-headed orphans.

Rather than taking one or two teachers from each school to once-off workshops, it may be better to send facilitators into schools to work together with all role-players
in setting up a plan that is specific for their school, and that addresses the potential problems by making the best use of existing strengths and assets (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2002). In this way, schools can self-generate specific solutions to their particular problems, then the whole school system becomes responsible for creating conditions that are conducive to the mental, physical, environmental and social health of learners and teachers, as well as families and community members, rather than the Life Orientation teacher alone.

All teachers could be trained in basic counselling skills and helped to develop strategies for coping with stress and negative emotions they are experiencing. School leadership could take the initiative to implement and monitor strategies that would promote the creation of a safe, trusting environment based on negotiated and accepted values and zero tolerance of stigmatisation and discrimination. Strategic goals could be set for equipping the physical environment with adequate resources to meet educational needs and promote the attainment of basic, safety and self-esteem needs of learners (Wood & Goba 2011).

The role of NGOs and community involvement are very important and they need to be strengthened. According to Mabetoa (2002, p.8), "community based care ensures the provision of a continuum of care and normalisation of services for children who have become vulnerable due to death of their parents". The following basic rights of children must be protected at school and in the community (Mabetoa, 2002). The best interest of the child should be the deciding factor in decisions regarding the care of any child. The child-headed orphans should, as far as possible, remain in their homes or communities of origin to avoid further trauma related to the loss of their parents. Family capacity-building for child-headed orphans and access to a variety of appropriate resources and support should be of primary concern to service providers. Services should be inter-sectoral and delivered by a multi-disciplinary team wherever appropriate. Programmes focusing on vulnerable children must ideally be linked to a specially formulated development programme for each child and his/her needs.

According to Dlamini (2004), the early identification of children in need of care and support is key and is therefore one of the most important responses by the government and the NGOs. Dlamini (2004) further argues that interventions to
identify children in need of care should be community-based as they are best placed to know which households are affected and what sort of help would be appropriate. The school could continue to support the identified orphans and educators could seek support from education districts in order to offer relevant support.

Pillay (2011) recommended that educational psychologists have to think and act from an eco-systemic perspective, because of the interactiveness and interdependence of the family, community and school in improving the lives the lives of child-headed orphans. They must also take into account the multicultural context, social justice competences and diversity, and be culturally competent in meeting the diverse needs of the orphans. Finally, they have to play multiple roles as teachers, remedial therapists, counsellors, social workers and even parents to many child-headed orphans.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

A limitation of the research was that it was conducted with child-headed orphans from one primary school based in Soweto only. The research participants were all Grade 7 learners and were representing one racial group, namely all black South Africans. The researcher did not include other race groups because the study was conducted in a school in which all learners belong to one race, therefore the research findings were contextualised within the area in which the research fieldwork was conducted. The language restriction was another limitation as participants were Setswana and Sepedi-speaking learners. The research participants who met the selection criteria was a small sample as there were only five learners (three girls and two boys).

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This inquiry provided an opportunity to engage with Grade 7 child-headed orphans and it gave them a platform on which to talk about their psychological and
educational experiences as orphans. They shared their pain of losing their parents and joy of being surrounded by people who cared for them.

Further research is needed to look into the development of teaching strategies, programmes and materials that would complement the need for educators to support and address issues, such as grief and bereavement as the general aspects of curriculum. The DoE also needs to strengthen the implementation of inclusion.

It is suggested that more intensive research needs to be conducted, particularly in the following areas:

- More learners need to participate in the study and more schools from different areas could be included in future research.
- Data collected from teachers who teach these learners including the SBST and NGOs will add more value to the findings of the study if they are included as research participants.
- Social workers also need to be included as research participants in order to provide more information on support offered by social development.

5.6 SUMMARY

Taking into consideration the limitation of this inquiry, it is hoped that suggestions and recommendations are the beginnings of sustainable initiatives by Department of Education in addition to District Based Support Team (DBST), School Based Support Team (SBST) and educational psychologists, to create supportive learning environments for orphans from child-headed homes. The study aimed at looking into the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 child-headed orphans at Kgola-thuto primary school in Soweto. It also looked at the support programmes available at school and in the community. Within the broader theoretical context of the research study an attempt has been made to understand and describe the lived psycho-educational experiences of Grade 7 orphans using the bio-ecological systems theory.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Pillay, J. (2011). Experiences of learners from child-headed households in a vulnerable school that makes a difference: Lessons for school psychologists. *School Psychology International* 2012 33: 3 originally published online 6 July 2011. The online version of this article can be found at: [http://spi.sagepub.com/content/33/1/3](http://spi.sagepub.com/content/33/1/3)


Sloth-Nielson, J. (2004). Realising the rights of children growing up in the child-headed households: a guide to laws, policies and social advocacy. University of the Western Cape: Community Law Centre


Education Policy and Data Center | FHI 360. (Accessed on 20 February 2013)


Appendix A: University of Johannesburg ethical Clearance

ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear MD Molefe

Ethical Clearance Number: 2013-004

Re: Psycho-educational experiences and support programmes for grade 7 child-headed orphans.

Ethical clearance for this study is granted subject to the following conditions:

- If there are major revisions to the research proposal based on recommendations from the Faculty Higher Degree Committee, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted.
- If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, it remains the duty of the student to submit a new application.
- It remains the student’s responsibility to ensure that all ethical forms and documents related to the research are kept in a safe and secure facility and are available on demand.
- Please quote the reference number above in all future communications and documents.

The Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee has decided to

☐ Grant ethical clearance for the proposed research.
☐ Provisionally grant ethical clearance for the proposed research
☐ Recommend revision and resubmission of the ethical clearance documents

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Prof Geoffrey Lautenbach
Chair: FACULTY OF EDUCATION RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
14 August 2013
**Appendix B: Department of Education Approval**

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**GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>9 September 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Validity of Research Approval:</td>
<td>9 September 2013 to 20 September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of Researcher:</td>
<td>Molefe M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address of Researcher:</td>
<td>733 Mopeii Street, Protea North, Soweto, 1818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone Number:</td>
<td>011 880 6333 / 083 942 1085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmatehloko.molefe07@gmail.com">mmatehloko.molefe07@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Topic:</td>
<td>Psycho-educational experiences and support programmes for Grade 7 child-headed orphans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number and type of schools:</td>
<td>ONE Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District's/NO:</td>
<td>Johannesburg North</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Re:** Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

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

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

---

**Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research**

9th Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 356 0000
Email: david.mashako@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

75
1. The District/Head Office Senior Managers concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

2. The District/Head Office Senior Managers must be apprised separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officers in the project.

3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairman of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researchers have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

4. A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.

5. The researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.

6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researchers may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.

7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.

8. Notes 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.

9. It is the researcher’s responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.

10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopiers, transport, fares and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/ or the offices visited for supplying such resources.

11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.

12. On completion of the study the researchers must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.

13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of their research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.

14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

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

Kind regards

Dr David Mashado
Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 20/09/10

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Knowledge Management and Research

9th Floor, 111 Connesser Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 369-0500
Email: david.mashado@gw.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpw.gov.za

76
Appendix C: Sample of Principal’s Consent Letter

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG
Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology

Permission Letter from the Principal

Study: Psycho-educational experiences and support programmes of grade 7 child-headed orphans

I hereby give permission to Mmatsholo Dina Molefe to conduct research and obtain relevant information with regard to the psycho-educational experiences of grade 7 child-headed orphans. The aim of the study is to provide guidelines for support to learners from the child-headed households. I am aware that Mmatsholo Dinah Molefe should provide the school with feedback after conducting the inquiry.

Principal’s signature: --------------------------- Date: ---------------------------
Appendix D: Sample of NGO Managing Director’s Consent Letter

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG
Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology

Permission Letter from the Director: Sizanani Community Centre

Study: Psycho-educational experiences and support programmes of grade 7 child-headed orphans

I hereby give permission to Mmatsholo Dinah Molefe to conduct research and obtain information with regard to psycho-educational experiences of grade 7 child-headed orphans. I am aware that data collected from the orphans under my care will be used for the study. I am also aware that the data will be treated with confidentiality and their privacy will be protected.

Director’s Signature: ----------------------------- Date: ----------------------------
Appendix E: Assent Letter by Participants

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG
Faculty of Education
Department of Educational Psychology

Participation Permission Letter

Study: Psycho-educational experiences and the support programmes of grade 7 child-headed orphans

I hereby give permission to take part in the research study conducted by Mmatsholo Dinah Molefe regarding psycho-educational experiences of grade 7 child-headed orphans. I understand that the study is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the study. I am also aware that I have the right to refuse to share information that is confidential.

I also give Mmatsholo Dinah Molefe permission to use the information provided by myself through interviews, life essays and observation in her study. She may also use audio-recordings for data collection. I understand that data collected from me will be treated with confidentiality and my privacy will be protected.

Learner’s Signature: -------------------------- Date: --------------------------
## Appendix F: Example of Semi-structured Individual Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| NAME | ____________________________ |

| 1. How long have you been staying with (Sister, brother) |
|________________________________________________________|

| 2. Where were you staying before your parents pass away |
|________________________________________________________|

| 3. How was your life before your parents pass away |
|________________________________________________________|

| 4. How is your life now (home and school) |
|________________________________________________________|

| 5. How is your relationship with Siblings |
|________________________________________________________|
6. How does your classmates treat you

7. How does your teachers treat you

8. Is there a person you can talk to when you feel sad

9. What are your needs and what kind of support do you need

10. What are your experiences as an orphan and what is their impact on your studies and your life in general
11. Have you applied for the high school and who assisted you

12. What are the good things that are happening at school and at home

13. How does that make you feel

14. Do you have friends at school or at home

15. What kind of support do you get from their friends

16. Who else is giving you support

17. How does that make you feel
18. What kind of support do you still need

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Appendix G: Example of Semi-structured Focus Group Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is your name -------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Where are you staying -----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Who are you staying with and why-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Who are your siblings and what ages are they.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How is your relationships in the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What are the challenges you are faced with at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What kind of support are you getting at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How is your life at school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

84
9. Which learning areas are you doing? 

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---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

10. What challenges are you facing with regard to your schooling including your performance? 

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

11. What kind of support are you getting from school? 

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Appendix H1: Extract of Life Essays

Example of Life Essay Transcript and Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Emerging Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I was very young before my mother and father died I was born at Carltonville where my father lived.</td>
<td>Still remembers their death</td>
<td>Grief and Loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He loved me so so much that he didn’t want my mother to punish me or anyone to do that to me.</td>
<td>Aware of his father’s love</td>
<td>Need for love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On my birthday on the 18th of December he used to buy me nice things and my mother used to say to him “you are going to make this child like money”.</td>
<td>Didn’t feel loved by mother</td>
<td>Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother didn’t love me, she loved her second born. I am her last born.</td>
<td>Sibling rivalry</td>
<td>Need for love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She didn’t love me and her first born that much or equally.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To my father I was first born, that’s why he loved me so so much.</td>
<td>Awareness of father’s love</td>
<td>Need for love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My father used to go everywhere with me but my mother loved to go with her second born even if it was after school she waited for her second born and she used to leave me at home.</td>
<td>Love for her parents</td>
<td>Need for love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I love my father so much and I do love my mother too and I miss them a lot.

I wish God didn’t take them away from me because I have no parents.

He will not take my sister away from me too.

Remembers parents

Angry with God

Angry with God

Grief and loss

Anger

Anger
Appendix H2: Extract of Individual Interview

Example of Individual interview Transcription and Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Emerging Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: How does your classmates treat you</td>
<td>Sadness due to ill-treatment</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: They don’t treat me well, I have problem with some learners,</td>
<td>Appreciates support</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>girls. They say I love boys because I prefer boys, girls like to gossip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: How does your teachers treat you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Right, they treat me well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: Is there a person you can talk to when you feel sad</td>
<td>Lack of trust and choose people</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Yes, my sister. When I visit her during school holidays</td>
<td>Motivated to continue with school</td>
<td>Value for education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because she stays in Chief Mogale (Krugersdorp)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What are your needs and what kind of support do you need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: The will need support until I finish school. I want to be a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor to help orphans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: How does being an orphan impact on your studies and your life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Emotionally I am not well but performance is fine.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: Have you applied for the high school and who assisted you</td>
<td>She feels sad</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: No, my sister said she will help me and I will be visiting her during these holidays.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What are the good things that are happening at school and at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Playing, having fun, making jokes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: How does that make you feel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: It helps me forget about sad things that has happened to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: Do you have friends at school or at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: yes one friend at school and one friend at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What kind of support do you get from their friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: We talk about issues and they encourage me to read</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What kind of support do you still need</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Finish school and help my sister and brother.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Mechanisms to deal with sadness |
| Support from friends |
| Support |
| Value for education |
## Appendix H3: Extract of Focus Group Interview

### Example of Focus Group Interview Transcription and Data Analysis

Man

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Coding</th>
<th>Emerging Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What are the challenges you are faced with at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: None (didn’t feel comfortable to talk with other learners present)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What kind of support are you getting at home</td>
<td>Support programmes</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Yes I get <strong>food and clothes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need for basic needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: How is life at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Life is right at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What challenges are you facing with regard to your schooling including your performance?</td>
<td>Performance in class</td>
<td>Performance in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: I <strong>struggle with Setswana but other subjects are fine.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What kind of support are you getting from school?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Yes I get support at school, from the teachers they take care of me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcription</td>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>Emerging Theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What are the challenges you are faced with at home.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: My <em>sister is not treating me well</em>, she is moody at times and we fight a lot</td>
<td>Sibling rivalry</td>
<td>Sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Need for love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What kind of support are you getting at home</td>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: my <em>sister buy me clothes</em> where she can</td>
<td>Support at home</td>
<td>Need for basic needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: How is life at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Life is right at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What challenges are you facing with regard to your schooling including your performance?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: I am <em>struggling with maths but my performance is well</em></td>
<td>Performance in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewer: What kind of support are you getting from school?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant: Yes I get <em>support from school, food and uniform.</em></td>
<td>Support at school</td>
<td>Need for basic needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Language Editing Certificate

Acknowledgment of Language Editing

Date: Tuesday, 25 February 2014

This is to certify that Language Editing has been carried out on the following:

PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND SUPPORT PROGRAMMES
FOR GRADE 7 CHILD-HEADED ORPHANS

by

Mmatsholo Dinah Molefe

Minor-dissertation

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