

**THE LIFE-WORLD OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED  
ADOLESCENTS: AN EDUCATIONAL  
GUIDANCE PERSPECTIVE**

by

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Mini - dissertation

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of  
the degree

**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**

 in UNIVERSITY  
OF  
JOHANNESBURG  
**PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME  
DEVELOPMENT**

in the

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND NURSING**

at the

**RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY**

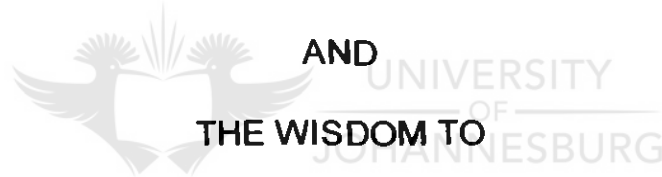
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**FEBRUARY 2002**

## **SERENITY PRAYER**

**GOD**

**GRAND ME THE SERENITY TO  
ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE,  
COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN**



**AND**

**THE WISDOM TO  
KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.**

**(ANONYMOUS)**

## **DEDICATION**

This research study is dedicated to:

- **My three children, Mantekane, Lerato and Karabo who were always there for me during those hard times.**
- **My wife, Matseleng who kept the home fire burning.**
- **My mother, Dimakatso who was with me through prayers and had faith that I would make it.**
- **All the visually impaired adolescents throughout our beautiful country, South Africa.**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- First and foremost I would like to express my sincere gratitude to God for giving me the courage, determination, and wisdom and guidance in conducting this research study.
- In addition I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following people and institutions:
- My supervisor, Professor CPH Myburgh for your continuous encouragement, support and guidance in extending my knowledge to the fullness of this research study.
- My co-supervisor, Professor M Poggenpoel. You made me believe that I can make it to the top and that I had so much energy, strength and courage to persevere amid the bruises I suffered along the road. Your tolerance and patience were the weapons I used to see myself through my studies.
- My family, your understanding, support and encouragement kept me moving. You never stopped believing in me and for that I thank you all.
- My mom, for your endless prayers and for your assistance in helping me to maintain the confidence in my ability.
- The staff of African Dawn Printers, for working tirelessly to print my work.
- The staff and learners of Sibonile School for the Blind for your hospitality throughout my research study.
- Finally, to my Afrikaans classes, you never complained when I told you I had to leave you in order to attend my appointments with my supervisors. I am very proud of you. I am also very happy with your final results. You proved my critics wrong.

## **SUMMARY**

The purpose of this research study is to determine the experiences of the visually impaired adolescents in their life-world. Visually impaired adolescents have mixed emotions, that is, feeling of helplessness, confusion, disbelief, powerlessness, fear, shamefulness and anxiety.

They generally consider themselves as inferior human beings. They are beset by predominantly negative images and see themselves, as either a source of trouble or in trouble. In bringing together this view one of my main challenges has been to challenge this problematic perspective on visually impaired adolescents. I also want to promote critical reflection on the position of visually impaired adolescents in our country and in so doing I have sought to capture and analyze the changing image and experiences of visually impaired adolescents and as well as the complexity of situations they go through.

I perceive a need to rethink visually impaired adolescents in terms of acknowledging and respecting the many positive contributions they can do and do make to their communities and how peers and adults can provide them with both effective support and positive criticism.

I believe that visually impaired adolescents peers and adults alike can learn and benefit from such a refashioned public dialogue. Thus this research study is represented as a positive contribution towards promoting the rights and acknowledging the responsibilities of visually impaired adolescents in our contemporary society.

The study is qualitative, explorative, descriptive and contextual in approach and it, therefore, became necessary to use phenomenological semi-structured interviews with visually impaired adolescents. The sample consisted of eight visually impaired adolescents residing at the school hostels. Before the interview trust was built through written request of permission to the principal of the school concerned to conduct the research study. The participating adolescents were also informed of what the research is all about before the main interview.

Data was analyzed utilizing Tesch's model Trustworthiness was ensured throughout the study by applying Guba's approach, including the services of an independent coder.

The findings of the study indicated that adolescents who are visually impaired live a stressful life and suffer much shame neglect, abuse and confusion because their aspirations, namely social, physical, emotional and educational are frustrated since they are not considered as human beings.

Guidelines for visually impaired adolescents were formulated around this theme with the aim of assisting them on how to cope in a similar situation, to mobilize resources in order to cope and lead a meaningful life irrespective of their physical status.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE LIFE WORLD OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS

#### RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW

##### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Visually impaired adolescents are human beings who engage in social activities of all sorts, just as so their counter-parts. Consequently the visually impaired adolescents are as entitled as are their sighted counter-parts to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to maintain their status as individuals. These rights are enshrined in our country's constitution on the Bill of Human Rights.

Unfortunately adolescents who are visually impaired, are by virtue of their impairment, at a disadvantage in gaining access to up-to-date information that is readily available in our community (Kapperman, Matsuoka & Pawelski, 1993:2). According to French and Selvin (in Roche & Tucker, 1997:199) these adversely affect the visually impaired adolescents' self-image and self-confidence. Such incidents may include the inability of visually impaired adolescents to function normally at home, school, in the community or to have satisfying sexual relationships.

According to Morris (1991:37) it is not surprising that young disabled people internalize the views of the wider society. Morris further more points out:

"Most of the people we have dealings with including our most intimate relationships, are not like us. It is therefore very difficult for us to recognize and challenge the values and judgements that are applied to us and our lives. Our ideas about disability and about ourselves are generally formed by those who are not disabled."

Another factor is that the society relies on visual messages in many ways to educate the broader public on social concerns. Billboards, print and

television advertisements, pamphlets and advertising have brought subtle messages to the everyday person about different issues in life. Adolescents with visual impairment are not to be excluded to this type of shared knowledge in the culture. Failure to include them has led them to be isolated from the main-stream of society and its concerns, and therefore are not able to participate fully in certain areas because valuable information is closed to them (Pointon, 1995:17).

All of the above-mentioned incidents have made the visually impaired adolescents to be victims of circumstances as far as daily life activities are concerned.

One pertinent factor in discussing the lack of access to information by adolescents who are visually impaired is that a large percentage of adolescents who are visually impaired also have other disabilities. Various multiple disabilities such as being mental challenged, behavior disorders, and learning disabilities, often give rise to learning problems. Therefore, these adolescents' problems in gaining access to information are compounded by the existence of learning difficulties (Kapperman, Matsuoka & Pawelski, 1993:1)

Dr. Martin Luther Jr. once said that we are all clothed in a single garment of destiny trapped by a web of mutuality. If we are indeed to find solutions to the many issues impacting our communities today, if we are to move from ignorance to action, we must learn very quickly Dr. King's lesson: "We must learn to live and work together as brothers and sisters or to die together as fools." People have one fundamental responsibility: to fight for each other, to care for each other and to love each other. People must always do the right things. People must create a table large enough to seat us all.

## **1.2 RATIONALE**

This mini-dissertation focuses on how the life world of visually impaired adolescents looks like and what can be done to guide them and help them

to cope and to lead a meaningful life in their communities. This will be done by focusing on factors which shape their identity and considering ways in which they can become more assertive and take more control of their lives (Everhart, Luazder & Tullos, 1980: 62-65; Inana, 1978: 367-372).

When you meet a person with disability, what is your first reaction? Do you shy away or you pretend that you do not see the person? Do you actually look forward to help when help is needed? Yes, the first meeting can be uncomfortable.

What people have to know is that the visually impaired adolescents grow up in a disabling environment where they face numerous physical and social barriers on a daily basis (Roche & Tucker, 1997: 199; Jones, 1996:38).

Most adolescents including the visually impaired, obtain information about sex from other adolescents (Welbourne, Lifschitz, Selvin & Green, 1983: 256-259; Kraft, 1993: 3-21). Unfortunately, adolescents with visual impairments are often rejected by sighted adolescents. According to Hudson (1994: 498-505) the visually impaired adolescents are not always in the midst of the sighted adolescents. They tend to lack play skills, ask too many questions and usually engage themselves in inappropriate acts of affection (Rettig, 1994: 410-420; MacCuspie, 1992: 102).

Visual information is regarded as the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Barraga, 1993: 182-183). This leads the visually impaired adolescents having less and less information at their disposal compared to their sighted counterparts. Books and magazines are a major source of information for young people, both blind and sighted. The radio in particular is an important source of information to visually impaired.

Another problem to information about their life world, the blind adolescents are overprotected by their families. Eventually their development of

sexuality is left to chance because other adolescents make decisions and plan activities for them (Baugh 1994: 407-409).

Neff (1983: 296-297) further states that the results are confusion, frustration, depression, poor self-image and self-confidence. Their parents' overprotection lead not only to difficulty in making decisions, but also to limited and distorted information on sexuality.

Adolescents with visual impairment are also more vulnerable to assaults; physical and sexual than are sighted adolescents. They cannot defend themselves and are therefore perceived as easy targets by perpetrators of sexual attacks and abuse (Pava, 1994: 103-112).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENTS**

The study on the life world is visually impaired adolescents of utmost importance in order to assist them to cope and lead a meaningful life in their communities regardless of their physical status.

The researcher is a guidance educator and offers guidance. Having taught for more than twenty years and through involvement in youth projects, the researcher came in close contact with different problems adolescents encountered in their life world. Among all these problems, the most devastating one is the life-world of the visually impaired.

In most instances the battle has become one-sided. The implication being that the attention is being paid to sighted adolescents. Given the gravity and the impact of visual impairment, it has become imperative for everybody to join in the battle against this discrimination.

The vulnerable people in our nation are the youth. The visually impaired have the same daily worries as people with unimpaired vision, namely, how to take care of themselves, do their jobs and live a satisfactory life.

The greatest concern is that these adolescents need to be guided so that they can mobilize their resources to cope and lead a meaningful life regardless of their physical status.

At this point in time, little, if any, social support is available for these adolescents. This research study will look at their life world and their quest to lead a meaningful life in their communities. Another important issue is also how they can get accurate information.

#### **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

From the above-mentioned problem statement the following research questions were formulated:

- How do visually impaired adolescents perceive their life-world?
- What can be done to assist and guide them to cope and lead a meaningful life regardless of their physical status?

#### **1.5 OBJECTIVES**

- To explore and describe the life-world of visually impaired adolescents.
- To describe guidelines to assist them on how to cope and lead a meaningful life.

#### **1.6 CENTRAL STATEMENT**

The exploration and description of the life-world of visually impaired adolescents will be a means which will provide the researcher with the basis for generating these guidelines.

#### **1.7 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The paradigmatic perspective of this research study is based on Durkheim's Rule of the Sociological Method (Durkheim, 1938:27) which states that we can learn about people by observing their behavior, that is,

what we see in external reality. It further states that people respond to external forces that are as real as physical pressures on objects.

### 1.7.1 META-THEORETICAL AND THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The pillar of any free and open democratic society is the notion that people ought to be treated equally. It is known that the core of the right to equality includes more than the right to equal treatment and protection of the law. According to AIDS Law Project (1999:18) it is considered as a substantive right, one that includes protection against social, political and legal prejudice.

In the paradigmatic perspective the following will be included:

- visually impairment
- guidance
- accompaniment
- environment
- adolescence

- **VISUAL IMPAIRMENT**



Hallahan and Kauffman (in Slavin, 1991: 421) offer an educational definition of visual impairment that depends on the level of adaptation required in the school setting. They suggest that the blind are those who are severely impaired that they must be taught to read by Braille. The partially blind can read print even though they need to use magnifying devices or books with large print. In short they are people with loss of vision such that there is an impact on activities of daily living.

- **GUIDANCE**

Guidance is an essential part in the process of leading adolescents to the state of independence and maturity (Gunter, Estes & Schwab, 1990: 70-80). Mwamwenda (1995: 520) defines it as a process of providing



information that can be of assistance in decision making. These visually impaired adolescents need guidance, that is, the source of direction in their lives. Covey (1994: 109) refers to guidance as the internal frame of reference that interprets what is happening out there.

- **ACCOMPANIER**

The task of the accompanier is to get to know and evaluate the adolescent in his/her life world so well that he/she is able to identify any factors that could lead the adolescent astray. At the same time he/she must be able to identify the adolescent's special talents and his/her interests so that the adolescent can be helped to develop them.

- **ENVIRONMENT**

It is believed that in different times and places, people had different ideas of what the environment is. Many people still believe that the environment has to do with natural areas. As our ideas are changing, we are beginning to realize that the environment is made up of the people and the places where they live, work and play. According to the Nursing for the Whole Person Theory (1992: 5-9) environment is multidimensional. The internal environment comprises the body, mind and spirit. The external environment comprises physical, social, political, educational, health and economic factors (Environmental Education, 1999: 4)

- **ADOLESCENCE**

It is the process of growing into adulthood. It is traditionally accepted as the time when each person needs to re-examine and re-evaluate himself/herself physically, socially and emotionally in relation to those close to him/her and to the society in general (Burns, 1979: 173; Mwamwenda, 1995; Morris, 1994: 37). Van Pelt (1990: 123) indicates that teenage according to Old English is derived from the word "teona", meaning injury, anger, and grief. Yes, the teen years can be painful for both teen-agers and parents.

During adolescence, peer relations become more intense and extensive, family relations are altered, and the adolescence begins to encounter many new demands and expectations in social situations. They may begin dating, working with others in a part-time job or spending time with peers without adult supervision (Coleman & Hendry, 1990: 105-111). According to Roche and Tucker (eds) (1997: 183), it represents what could be called therefore cultural "hot spot" which is presented as a region requiring careful supervision, yet at exactly the point when direct adult supervision is becoming increasingly inappropriate.

### **1.7.2 METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS**

Methodological assumptions comprise the researcher's perceptions of the nature and structure of science in his/her research discipline in this research, guidance. In accordance to functional approach the knowledge generated from guidance research is to be applied to guidance practice in order to improve the quality of its study. Methodological assumptions are reflected in the objectives and methods used in research.

In this research, understanding into life-world of the visually impaired adolescents will provide the basis for guidelines for helping them to cope in their environment.

The researcher's assumptions as to how trustworthiness of data findings will be ensured, are according to the methods of ensuring trustworthiness by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 290-308) and Krefting (1991: 214). These measures are ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability of the data collected in a qualitative research study.

Data collected from phenomenological interviews will be validated and justified by appropriate literature control.

## **1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD.**

In this section the researcher is going to give a brief description of the research design and research method of the study. A detailed description will be given in Chapter 2.

### **1.8.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher is going to utilize the qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design.

### **1.8.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

The study will be conducted in two phases. The first phase will consist of phenomenological interview with visually impaired adolescents. This phenomenological approach will be used to facilitate the exploration of the adolescents' life-world holistically (Polit & Hugler, 1991: 651; Burns, & Grove, 1993: 30).

The second phase will concern itself with the formulation and description of guidelines to assist them on how to cope and lead a meaningful life regardless of their physical status.

#### **Phase 1: Exploring and describing the life-world of visually impaired adolescents.**

In this phase respondents will be visually impaired adolescents. Semi-structured phenomenological interviews will be conducted. The study will be accompanied by field notes and the adherence to the necessary ethical measures, followed by data analysis. The literature control and results will be described.

### **1.8.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

The target population will be visually impaired adolescents.

The criteria to be used will be as follow:

- \* Visually impaired adolescents.
- \* They must at least be able to communicate in English, Tswana or Sotho.
- \* They must be between 14-23 years of age.

### **1.8.4 DATA COLLECTION**

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with the participants in the sample. A tape recorder will be used to record interviews during data collection (Rubin & Barbie, 1992: 92; Field & Morse, 1992: 60; Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 125) which will be transcribed verbatim.

A central question will be asked during the interview: "HOW IS IT FOR YOU TO BE VISUALLY IMPAIRED"? This procedure will involve studying the subjects through prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning.

Each interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. The researcher will use facilitative communication techniques such as listening, reflecting, clarifying, and summarizing with minimal responses to encourage the interviewees to ventilate their experiences and feelings.

Follow-up interview will be conducted with some participants to validate the information gathered about their life-world. Field notes will be written after each interview session to describe the researchers observations (participants physical appearance, characteristics, style of communication, physical setting, non-verbal interaction, feeling and tone) and experiences (Talbot, 1995: 478; Field & Morse, 1992:71-82; Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:99).

### **1.8.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis will be conducted simultaneously with data collection and interpretation. This is done so that the researcher is not overwhelmed by voluminous data at the end of data collection (Creswell, 1994: 153). The tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim and then analyzed according to the methods and steps suggested by Tesch (in Creswell, 1994: 154-155). This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2. An independent coder will code the data as a measure to ensure reliability or dependability.

### **1.8.6 LITERATURE CONTROL**

In the literature control, the results of the research will be discussed. According to Streubert and Carpenter (1995: 21), the result should be placed in the context of what is already known from relevant literature and information obtained from similar studies.

#### **Phase 2: Description of guidelines inferred from the results of Phase 1**

During this phase, data collected from respondents will be used as a basis for describing guidelines to assist the visually impaired adolescents on how to cope and lead a meaningful life. These guidelines will also be discussed with an expert in the field of qualitative research for the purpose of refining them.

### **1.8.7 MEASURE TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS**

The researcher will strive to adhere to the principles of trustworthiness throughout the two phases of research. Trustworthiness of the interviews and finding will be ensured by the use of Lincoln and Guba's model (Lincoln & Guba 1985: 290-308). They identify four criteria to ensure trustworthiness of interviews and findings. They are: truth-value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. To ensure truth-value, a strategy

of credibility is used; for applicability, transferability is used, for consistency, dependability is used; for neutrality, confirmability is used. These strategies will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

### **1.8.8 ETHICAL MEASURES**

According to Burns and Grove (1993: 89), research ethics start with the identification of the research topic and continue through the publication of the study. Ethical codes provide the researcher with guidelines for protecting the rights of human subjects, balancing benefits and risks in a study and obtaining informed consent (Dane, 1990: 38-60; De Vos, 1998:24-34; Swetnam, 1999:16). Ethical measures will be described in-depth in Chapter 2.

### **1.9 CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusion, and recommendations will be formulated, guidelines formulated, limitations discussed and recommendations made with regard to the findings in the research of this study.

### **1.10 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS**

Below is the layout of how the chapters will be divided and organized in this study.

- Chapter 1: Overview and rationale.
- Chapter 2: Research design and method.
- Chapter 3: Results of Phase 1: Phenomenological interviews and literature control.
- Chapter 4: Phase 2: Guidelines, conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## 1.11 SUMMARY

The research overview and rationale, problem statement, research objectives, paradigmatic perspective, research design and method have been discussed in this chapter. The research design and method will be discussed in more details in Chapter 2.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter 1 an overview of the research study was discussed. In this chapter, a description of the research design and method will be given.

#### **2.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study has the following objectives based on the identified problem:

- \* To explore and describe the life world of the visually impaired adolescents.
- \* To describe guidelines to assist them on how to cope and lead a meaningful life.

#### **2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

The research design and method guiding this study will be described in this section.

##### **2.3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Mouton (1996: 107) defines a research design as a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem. The design used in this study will be qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual. It will be used to gain as much understanding as possible into the life world of the visually impaired adolescents.

##### **2.3.1.1 QUALITATIVE**

A qualitative study offers the opportunity to uncover the nature of the people's actions, experiences and perspectives, of which little is known as



yet (Glasser, 1992:12). Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 5) state that the qualitiveness of the study can also be explained by the fact that it focuses on finding answers to questions that centre on social experiences, how it is created and how it gives meaning to the whole human life (Burns & Grove, 1993: 28-29). Schmid (in Krefting, 1991: 241) defines qualitative research as the study of empirical world from the viewpoint of the person under study.

Emphasis is placed on the subjective meaning and perceptions of the subject, therefore it is the researcher's responsibility to access these.

With this approach people are being observed in their own territory and interacting with them in their own language, on their own terms (Kvale, 1983: 83; Mouton & Marais, 1990: 205, Silverman, 1997: 5, Burns & Grove, 1993: 28-29; Kvale, 1996:30-33). In this study, qualitative approach seeks to gain insight into the life world of the visually impaired adolescents or seeks to offer reliable and valid description of these adolescents. It is concerned with the nature of these experiences, which are unique to each individual. Its qualitiveness can also be explained by the fact that it is a systematic subjective approach used to describe their life world and giving them meaning

#### **2.3.1.2 EXPLORATORY**

The research study will be an exploratory study with the purpose of gaining insight into the increasing knowledge in the life-world of visually impaired adolescents. The researcher will depart from the position of "not knowing" or curiosity and this will enable him to gain a richer understanding in the phenomenon (Mouton & Marais, 1990:43-44; Mouton, 1996: 102; De Vos, 1998:124; Polit & Hungler, 1995:11; Strauss & Corbin, 1990: 19, Burns & Grove, 1993: 28-29, Creswell, 1994:145)

### 2.3.1.3 DESCRIPTIVE

In descriptive approach, the researcher is interested in process, meaning and understanding gained through words and pictures (Creswell, 1994: 145). The intention of the researcher is to obtain unique, subjective information from the phenomenon in order to describe the reality of phenomenological experience and not the reality as the researcher believes it to be. Burns and Grove (1993:23) state that descriptive studies are usually conducted when little is known about a phenomenon of interest. Its advantage in qualitative research is its ability to collect accurate information on the phenomenon under investigation (Mouton & Marais, 1990:43-44) and for its ability to provide a clear picture of the situations being studied (Creswell; 1993:63; Svanson-Kauffman & Schonwald, 1988:99).

The life world of the visually impaired adolescents will be explored and described. The saturated themes will provide guidelines intended to develop coping strategies for guidance facilitators assisting visually impaired adolescents in leading a meaningful life regardless of their physical status

According to Streubert and Carpenter (1995:36-44) a descriptive approach is central to phenomenological investigation. The researcher will therefore facilitate the description of the phenomenon "the life world" of visually impaired adolescents by applying the principle of "bracketing" and "intuiting" allowing the phenomenon to unfold without hindrance.

#### \* **Bracketing**

Bracketing is important in phenomenological research. It serves the purpose of enabling the researcher to ensure that phenomenological reduction is important in phenomenological studies. To do this, the researcher is firstly required to identify any preconceived ideas (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995: 32-33) concerning the adolescents participating in the study. The identified knowledge and beliefs about these adolescents will

be bracketed out of consciousness by retaining a neutral stance regarding the revelations of the interviews, avoiding personal beliefs from interfering with the descriptions given by adolescents (De Vos, 1998:337; Burns & Grove, 1987: 80; Holstein & Gubrium, 1994: 262-272; Neuman, 2000: 75; Neuman 1997, 401). This procedure facilitates “seeing” all the facets of the phenomenon and formation of new constructs.

• **The process of intuiting**

Streubert and Carpenter (1995:32) describe it as accurate interpretation of what is meant in the description of the phenomenon under investigation. De Vos (1998:337) describes it as the process of actually “looking at” the phenomenon. In this research it means the description of the life world of visually impaired adolescents by imaginatively varying the data collected from interviews until a common understanding emerges. It requires absolute concentration and complete absorption with the experience being studied (Burn & Grove, 1998: 80; Streubert & Carpenter, 1995: 32) by reflecting about the phenomenon in relation to the various descriptions generated.

**2.3.1.4**

**CONTEXTUAL**



A contextual study is one in which the phenomenon of interest is studied in terms of its intrinsic and immediate context (Mouton & Marais, 1990: 49 Mouton 1996:133). Contextual studies are said to focus on specific events. This study is contextual because the researcher has to take into consideration the social, physical and cultural values of the participants in the study (Field & Morse, 1992:11). This study is contextual in that it deals with visually impaired adolescents in their unique environment at a specific school in Gauteng Province. Context implies the conditions and situations of an event, the cultural and historical situation, which is important for an understanding of a phenomenon, and the meaning, which the participants give to it (Holloway & Wheeler, 1996: 192).

## **2.4 RESEARCH METHOD**

In this section the method in which the study will be carried out will be examined. The research will be conducted in two phases encompassing the following:

- \* The life world of visually impaired adolescents.
- \* Guidelines to assist them on how to cope in a similar situation, to mobilize resources in order to cope and lead a meaningful life irrespective of their physical status.

### **2.4.1 Phase 1: Exploration and description of the life world of visually impaired adolescents**

The objective of the first phase of the research is to explore and describe the life world of visually impaired adolescents. In this phase the researcher aims to obtain as much information about the realities of their lives at home, at school and in their neighborhood. In order to achieve the expected aims in this phase the researcher meet the informants who will participate in the study, so that data can be collected, coded and analyzed.

A phenomenological research approach as described by Burbank (1992:30) will be used to guide this study because it is suitable for studying lived experiences. The guiding theme of the phenomenology is to go back to the "things" themselves, that is , going to the everyday world where people are living through various phenomenon in actual situations (Giorgi, 1985: 58). According to Omery (1983:50), the researcher must approach the phenomenon to explore, with no preconceived expectations or categories. The researcher has no preconceived operational definitions.

### **2.4.1.1 SAMPLING**

Sampling is the process of selecting groups of people with whom to conduct research (Burns & Grove, 1993:58; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996:188-189). This will be the target population to which the researcher has reasonable access. Burns and Grove (1993: 236) describe target population as the entire set of individuals who meet sampling criteria. This is the population of subjects available for sampling, often a non-random subset of the target population whose characteristics are well known (Watters & Biernack; 1989:420; Brink, 1996: 14; Polit & Hunglar, 1991: 152).

In this study, the target population will be visually impaired adolescents who attend a specific school in the Gauteng Province. Access to the adolescents will be through the school principal and guidance teachers/facilitators. Purposive sampling will be utilized to include participants in this research who comply with the sampling criteria.

#### **\* Sampling criteria**

Sampling criteria are used to assist the researcher in determining the target population for the study (Burns & Grove, 1993: 403) and are based, amongst other, on the research problem, research purpose and research design. Events, incidents and experiences are also regarded as important when formulating sampling criteria (Sandelowski, 1995:180).

Characteristics of the population for inclusion are:

- \* They must be adolescents who are visually impaired.
- \* They should be attending the specific school so that it will be possible to keep contact through out the study and to facilitate interpretation of findings.
- \* They must be between the ages of 14-23 years of age.

- \* They must be able to communicate in English, South Sotho and Tswana because the researcher will be able to communicate meaningfully in these languages.
- \* Participants will be prepared to participate in the research; such participation elicited by their written consent (Braille writing) if the need arises.
- \* Participant will agree to the interview sessions being audio-taped and transcribed.
- \* Sampling size

In a qualitative research study such as this one, the researcher is committed to obtain a clear understanding of the life world rather than a stipulated sample size. What determines the sample size is, therefore, development of a rich and dense description (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:24) of the life world of visually impaired adolescents. The size of the sample will, therefore, be determined by the factor of data saturation. According to Morse (1994: 104) and Streubert and Carpenter (1995:24), they describe it as the point at which data collection themes of saturation points are repeated (Burns & Grove, 1993: 247).

In this study, saturation will be reached at a point where no new information on their life world is generated by the adolescents.

#### **2.4.1.2 DATA COLLECTION**

Burns and Grove (1993:423) state data collection as a process of selecting subjects and gathering data from these subjects. Since the life world of adolescents who are visually impaired is the focal point of this study, the phase of data collection is intended to gain access into this world. Data will then be collected through the used of multiple methods, namely, in-

depth phenomenological audio-taped interviews, field notes, use of communication techniques and the role of the researcher.

Phenomenological studies are studies in which human experiences are examined on the basis of detailed description by the people being studied, that is, understanding of the lived experiences. Marshall and Rossman (1989: 82) cite that in qualitative in-depth interviews, interviews are much more like conversations than formal structured ones. They further state that the participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest is allowed to unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it. Through this process the researcher "brackets" his/her own experience in order to understand those of the respondents (Creswell, 1994: 12).

In this study the respondents will be interviewed at the school premises or at a place convenient to them. Interviews will be tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim (Burns & Grove, 1993:578-581). One central question will be asked during the interviews:

**TELL ME YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCES AS A VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENT**

Each interview session will last approximately 45 - 60 minutes. Follow up interviews will be conducted with some of the participants to validate the information given. The aim of selecting this method is that it enables participants to present with what is "true and real" (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:35) in their life. It also guides the researcher to gather description of the life world of the respondents and respect the interviewees' interpretation of the meaning of the phenomenon to be described. It makes it possible for the interviewees to organize their own descriptions emphasizing what they themselves find important in their own life world - their opinions and actions, in their own words (Kvale, 1983: 13; Giorgi, 1985: 57).

It goes beneath the surface to explore a sense deeper than the common sense. Great emphasis is placed on interviewer sensitivity and creativity.

## \* THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE

Polit and Hungler (1991:350) state that data collection in qualitative research requires a minimum of researcher-imposed structure and a maximum of researcher involvement. The use of researcher's personality is a key factor in qualitative research. Empathy and intuition are deliberately used and skills in these areas are activated by the researcher (Burns & Grove, 1993:80). It is therefore essential that the researcher does everything possible to create a conducive atmosphere that will encourage the respondent to talk freely (Giorgi, 1985:56).

## \* USE OF COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Non-directive communication techniques such as reflecting, summarizing, probing, paraphrasing, clarifying and minimal responding are used to encourage respondents who are interviewed to freely articulate their views and findings (Okun, 1987: 76).

- ◆ **Reflecting:** It involves expressing in fresh words the interviewee's essential feelings stated or strongly implied (Brammer, 1988: 76; Gillis, 1992: 54; Covey, 1994: 249).
- ◆ **Summarizing:** It involves putting together into one statement several ideas and feelings at the end of a discussion unit or the end of an interview. The main purpose is to give the interviewee a feeling of movement in exploring ideas and feelings, as well as awareness of progress in communication (Brammer, 1988: 76; Gillis, 1992: 58).
- ◆ **Probing:** It refers to the interviewer's ability to help the respondents identify and explore experiences behaviors and feelings that will help them engage more constructively in any of the steps of communication (Madel, 1991:18).
- ◆ **Paraphrasing:** It is a method of restating the interviewee's basic message in similar, but usually fewer words. This method is used by



the interviewer to test his/her understanding of what the interviewee has said (Brammer, 1998:76). In simpler forms it is introduced by changing the pronoun "I" to "You" (Gillis, 1992: 53).

- ◆ **Clarifying:** It means bridging vague material into sharper focus. The interviewer makes a guess regarding the interviewee's basic message and offer it to the interviewee or the interviewer may also ask for clarification when he/she cannot make sense of the interviewee's response (Brammer, 1988: 132).
  
- ◆ **Minimal Responding:** Is that the interviewer adopts a less active role and allows more time for the respondent to talk (Stuart & Sundeen, 1983: 122).

#### \* **FIELD NOTES**

For the purpose of obtaining supportive information for the interviews conducted, field notes will be recorded during each interview (Marshall, 1985: 108). These field notes are essential in qualitative research because they provide the researcher with a system for remembering observations gained during the interview process (Wilson, 1989: 434) and more importantly, they can be retrieved and analyzed.

The following are forms of field notes as part of observation:

- ◆ **Theoretical notes**

Theoretical notes according to Wilson (1989: 435) are notes which the researcher makes with the intention of deriving meaning from the observational notes. Following the interview, these notes will be used to interpret, infer and conjecture on which analytical scheme can be built.

#### ◆ **Methodological Notes**

Extra notes such as methodological notes will be kept for the researcher's self-critique in respect of tactics used. They are valuable because they represent instructions about the methodological approaches which might be beneficial (Wilson, 1989: 435; Polit & Hungler, 1995: 306).

#### ◆ **Personal notes**

Personal notes are notes about one's own reactions, inflections and experiences and they are complimentary to phenomenological interviews (Talbot, 1995: 478)

### **2.4.1.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

"The intent of the analysis is to organize the data into a meaningful, individualized interpretation or framework that describes the phenomenon studied" (Burns & Grove, 1993: 29).

The tape-recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim. The data will then be analyzed according to steps outlined by Tesch (in Creswell, 1994: 155). Field notes will be organized in descriptive notes that will include a reconstruction of dialogue, a description of the physical setting, accounts of particular events and activities. They will also include reflexive notes consisting of researcher's personal thoughts such as speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions and prejudices (Bogdan & Bikleu in Creswell, 1994: 152).

The data analysis will proceed as follows:

#### ◆ **Assembling and organizing data:**

The data collected via the audio-tape will be transcribed verbatim and the data collected in the notebook will be organized into personal and

analytic logs. A personal log contains a descriptive recollection of the interview's non-verbal cues, reflective notes on the field work experience and methodological issues. An analytical log contains a detailed examination of questions asked as well as ideas as the study progresses (Guba & Lincoln, 1985: 327).

◆ **Method of data analysis.**

Tesch in Creswell (1994: 155) will be used as a method of choice for data analysis. After all the interviews have been transcribed, a sense of a whole is obtained by doing the following:

- Read carefully through all the transcripts to get the sense of the whole.
- Pick the most interesting or shortest interview, jot some ideas as they come to mind, ask yourself what the study is all about. Think about the underlying meaning and write thoughts in the margin.
- Make a list of all topics from all the interviews and cluster similar topics together.
- Form these topics into columns that might be arranged as major topics, unique topics and leftovers. Take the list and go back to the data.
- Abbreviate the topics as codes and write codes next to the appropriate segment of the text.
- Try out this preliminary organizing scheme to see whether new categories and codes emerge.
- Triangulation of data will be made by consulting an independent coder who will analyze the interview independently of the researcher.

The independent coder is a researcher who is familiar with conducting qualitative data analysis. A protocol describing the method of data

analysis will also be provided to the independent coder. The protocol contains no pre-ordained themes or categories and is therefore known as an open coding. After the interviews have been analyzed, the researcher and the independent coder will meet for a consensus discussion. After consensus has been reached, the results will be translated into English.

The themes as they have emerged in the interviews and as interpreted by the researcher, will be discussed by the researcher with the interviewees in the follow up interviews. This is to ensure that information obtained, is representative of what the interviewees meant.

After data has been analyzed, examples of patterns of interaction between the internal and external environment of the respondents will be interpreted in terms of a social theory, as stated by Neuman (1997: 426).

#### **2.4.1.4 LITERATURE CONTROL**

The results of the research will be discussed in the light of relevant literature and information obtained from similar studies to verify the results, that is, to place them in context to what is already known (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:21). Referential checks enhance the scientific trustworthiness of the study. This is a strategy used to ensure trustworthiness by means of triangulation.

#### **2.4.2 PHASE 2: DESCRIPTION OF GUIDELINES ASSISTING THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS ON HOW TO COPE AND LEAD A MEANINGFUL LIFE REGARDLESS OF THEIR PHYSICAL STATUS.**

The objective of phase two is to describe guidelines for guidance teachers/facilitators in assisting visually impaired adolescent to cope and lead a meaningful life regardless their physical status. These guidelines will be discussed with adolescents who are visually impaired and their guidance teachers/facilitators to verify their appropriateness.

### 2.4.3 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The researcher will strive to adhere to the principle of trustworthiness throughout the two stages of research. Guba & Lincoln (in Krefting, 1991: 215) regard trustworthiness as a method of ensuring rigor in qualitative research without sacrificing relevance. The researcher will apply Guba's model (in Krefting, 1991:217) which identifies the following four criteria and strategies for establishing trustworthiness.

#### \* Truth Value

Truth value is usually obtained from the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by respondents. The strategy for establishing truth value is credibility. This is achieved through the following: prolonged and varied field experience, time sampling, reflexivity, member checking, peer examination, interview technique, establishing authority of researcher, structural coherence, and referential adequacy (Krefting, 1991:215-217).

Applicability refers to the extent to which findings can be applied to other context and settings or with other groups.

Transferability is the strategy employed to attain applicability. This is obtained by using a purposive sample, working contextual, time sampling and dense descriptions (Krefting, 1991: 215-1217). Consistency of data refers to whether the findings would be consistent if the inquiry was replicated with the same subjects or in a similar context. Dependability is a strategy used to establish consistency. This is achieved by keeping a dependability audit, providing a dense description of research methods, triangulation, peer examination and code re-code procedure (Krefting, 1991: 217). Neutrality refers to the extent to which the findings are a function solely of the respondents and conditions of the research, and not of other biases, motivations and perspectives in Guba's Model (in Krefting, 1991: 214 222) Confirmability is the strategy used to ensure neutrality.

The following table (table 2.1) indicates how measures were applied to ensure trustworthiness in this research.

Table 2.1 Strategies to ensure trustworthiness which will be applied in this research.

<b>STRATEGY</b>	<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>APPLICABILITY</b>
Credibility	Prolonged and varied field experience	Contact at school with visually impaired adolescents. Spend some time with respondents before interview to build rapport. Interviews will allow respondents to verbalize their experience during the interview.
	Reflexivity	Field notes will be taken by the researcher.
	Member checking	Follow up interviews will be held with respondents. Literature control on themes and its impact on guidelines will be discussed.
	Peer examination	The service of a colleague will be required.
	Authority of researcher	The researcher had undergone previous training in research methods. This study is supervised by experts in the field of qualitative research.
	Structural coherence	The focus of this research will be on adolescents who are visually impaired and their experiences of their life world.
Transferability	Nominated sample	The sampling method will be purposive, no prior selection
	Dense description	Complete description of methodology including literature control to maintain clarity will be used.
Dependability	Dependability audit	Personal logs and reflexivity notes will be used and kept.
	Dense description	Research methodology will be fully described
	Peer examination	Independent checking by a colleague and supervision by experts
	Code re-code procedure	Consensus discussion between researcher and independent expert.
Confirmability	Audit trial	Independent coder

(Adapted from Poggenpoel, Nolte, Dorfling, Greef, Gross, Muller, Nel & Roos, 1994: 131-136).

#### **2.4.4 ETHICAL MEASURES**

In phenomenological research the researcher has a moral obligation to seek new knowledge. This is not separated from moral obligation to consider the rights of the participants who are expected to provide this knowledge (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:44). In such a situation the researcher is aware that it is of vital importance to build trust between himself / herself and the adolescents and to respect them as autonomous and therefore capable to make sound decisions (Burns & Grove, 1993:83; Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:44; Dane, 1990:38-60; De Vos, 1998: 24-34).

**The following ethical measures will be adhere to:**

- **Competence of the researcher**

The researcher has undergone training in research methodology and interpersonal skills. The study will be supervised by experts in this field and who are actively involved in qualitative research. Competence of the researcher will be nurtured and assessed by research specialists with view of facilitating a morally just guidance research and social justice (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, Alexander, 1991: 236-244). Interaction will be conducted in short periodical intervals.

- **Researcher-respondent relationship**

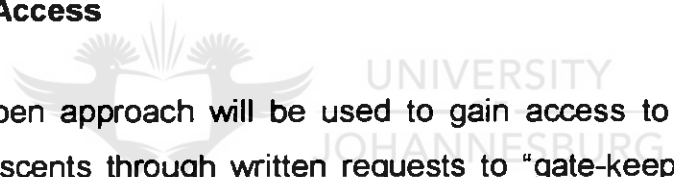
The researcher will try to make research as transparent as possible. The rationale is to maintain a balanced relationship between the researcher and the respondents. This will be achieved by informing respondents about the study and its purposes as well as the possible inconveniences to respondents during the course of the study, such as time investment. Participants will be given the option whether or not to participate in the study and they will be allowed to withdraw at any time.

The researcher is also aware that qualitative research is an on going transactional process (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:181) and that dealing with sensitive issues requires continuous restating of ethical principles (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995:44). Permission to use audio-tapes and to take notes will be obtained from the participants in the study (Creswell, 1994:148). Adolescents will be informed that they may switch off the recorder during the interview if they do not want a particular piece of information to be recorded. Measure to maintain confidentiality will be explained.

Finally, more information will be given to the participants about where to contact the researcher if necessary to validate interpretations from interviews. The results of the study will be disclosed to the respondents if they wish and also in the event where the results should be published.

See annexure 1 and 2 for examples of permission letters:

- **Gaining Access**



An open approach will be used to gain access to the respective adolescents through written requests to “gate-keepers” (Creswell, 1994:148). In this study “gate-keepers” can be either parents of adolescents, the school Governing Body, or the principal of the school. A short informational motivation will be forwarded if the need arises.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Conclusion and recommendations of this study, together with its limitations, will be built on the strengths of its findings.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, a description was given of the research design and method.

In chapter 3, a discussion of the results of the research data will be given.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **THE EXPERIENCES OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS**

#### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

##### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter the research methodology and the research design for this study were discussed. In this chapter the results and analysis of the data will be presented and discussed according to the identified theme and categories and will be verified with the literature control.

##### **3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE**

The sample of this study is comprised of eight visually impaired adolescents who are attending at a special school for visually impaired learners. In the beginning the sample comprised of ten visually impaired adolescents. Two of them withdrew due to personal reasons. The researcher had no right to question their withdrawal because it was totally unethical to do that.

All participants agreed to participate in this research without any element of force, duress or any other form of constraint or coercion. By withdrawal, they were exercising their rights as far as ethical measures are concerned.

The participants are both boys and girls ranging between the ages of 14-23 years. All of them can at least communicate in English because English is the medium of instruction at their school. The youngest participant is 15 years of age and the oldest being 23 years old. Three of them are from single-parent families. The participants are all literate with the highest standard being grade 8 and the lowest standard being grade 5.

During the audio-taped interviews, the participants were encouraged to talk about their life-world experiences. Data was found to be saturated on

the fourth day of the completion of semi-structured phenomenological interviews with the visually impaired adolescents.

### **3.3 FINDINGS FROM THE FIELD WORK**

For the purpose of consistency and better understanding of the expressed responses from the phenomenological interviews, the data will be presented according to the identified theme and categories and a discussion of linkage leading to a central theme that emerged and supported by the literature control.

There is evidence that adolescents who are having difficulty with vision experience their lives as inferior compared to their sighted counterparts. They are constantly frustrated and humiliated by peers, neighbors, teachers, and in other instances their family members.

Somehow the fact that they had to be moved from normal schools to special schools, gave them some identity and hope. It appears too that for those who had hope to improve from medical intervention became more frustrated when it failed. This also may have led to hopelessness experienced by family members.

The following theme was identified:

Visually impaired adolescents experience themselves as inferior human-beings.

There were four categories that were identified under this theme and each will be highlighted by quotation and excerpts which will be depicting the problems experienced by the adolescents with visual impairment.

Table 3.1. Visually impaired adolescents experience themselves as inferior beings.

<b>CATEGORIES IDENTIFIED</b>	
1.	Experience of confused self-perception: It is related to visually impaired adolescents not being regarded like human beings, not being part of them and not being respected.
2.	Experience of Social rejection of visually impaired adolescents: Related to being humiliated by family members, neighbors, teachers, peers and this resulted to poor communication and poor interpersonal relationships.
3.	Experience of Stigmatized visually impaired adolescents: Related to being teased called with unacceptable names, labelled shunned and neglected.
4.	Experience of Physical abuse of the visually impaired adolescents: Related to ill-treatment by family members, teachers, not trusted, lack of needed support.

### **3.4 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

The discussion of the findings will be based on the theme and categories in table 3.1. In order to maintain clarity, the discussion will where relevant be substantiated by the appropriate direct quotes from the transcription and literature. The categories identified are:

- confused self-perception
- social rejection
- stigmatized
- physical abuse.

### **3.4.1 EXPERIENCE OF CONFUSED SELF-PERCEPTION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS**

Self-perception can be seen as a total picture that a human-being is having of himself/herself, how he/she sees himself/herself, what his/her characteristics are, how he/she judges himself/herself in appearance, ability, talents, attitudes, feelings, motives, goals and ideals and values communicated by other people and own experience. It can also be influenced by his/her race and gender (Mason et. al., 1999 :110-113; Gillis, 1992: 79-80; Long & Fogell, 1999: 33; Corey & Corey 1992: 117; Gerdes 1989: 64).

During adolescence every child wants to achieve a sense of identity which is crucial in order to lay the foundation for subsequent personality development. This process development begins in early childhood, but becomes a development crisis demanding resolutions during the period of adolescence. If a clear definition of identity is not achieved, role and identity confusion as well as uncertainty will stand in the way of the adolescent's commitment to adulthood and long-term objectives. This statement is supported by Long and Fogell (1999: 32 -33) and Gerdes (1989: 64).

Example:

"They used to say blind are born beggars. They only sit at the corners of shopping centres begging for the whole day. So they said I was just wasting time to attend school. I just have to leave school and go to beg for money. I felt belittled, dehumanized and being nothing at all. Yes, I felt different, like I'm not ... I'm not a human being. I'm not ... I'm not their same."

The visually impaired adolescent could not understand why he is not regarded as a human being. As a human he generally accepts himself as an individual who is very much content with himself. When sighted adolescents react negatively towards him, he becomes confused and starts to wonder who and what he is.

The second one said:

“Of course, it was like I was an animal because all these children did not like me. Sometimes when they are playing and I decide to join them, they would go away one by one. I didn't like that because I could not understand what they saw in me. Maybe I'm ugly. I really don't know.”

Another one said:

“When I'm with them playing they usually shout at me. They could not talk to me nicely. I could not understand why they treated me like nobody. Maybe I'm just unattractive and unsophisticated”

It is an unfortunate thing that adolescents with visual impairment are often subjected into confused self-perception by their sighted peers. They are being considered as lacking body-image, particularly external appearance which is as well associated to attitude and feelings.

Body image also reflects the value and meaning which an individual attach to various aspects of his/her physical self. Physical attractiveness includes not only physical beauty, but also good grooming and posture. Attractiveness and stylish dressing, acceptable hair styles and make-ups, and a good feeling about one's look, all enhance the self-perception.

The visually impaired adolescents believe that they are being deliberately rebuked, shouted and obstructed in being part of their sighted peers and also not being respected or regarded as human beings make them feel angry and experience frustration and confusion.

They consider their impairment as a stumbling block towards being valued and respected as human beings. They tend to lose their identity which is an important factor to all human beings. This is supported by Hudson (1994: 498: 503) Rettig (1994: 410 - 420) and MacCuspie (1992: 83-103).

### **3.4.2 EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL REJECTION OF THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS**

The concept "social" denotes that the social life of the adolescent has its origins in the family life and in interpersonal relationships, but the adolescents social life is also actualized in a wider social context. Therefore the family is regarded as a fundamental unit which is responsible with the socializing of its members so that human beings can continue to co-exist and lead a meaningful life.

In socialization the values, socio-moral norms, attitudes, philosophy of life, social skills, knowledge and culture of social groups are transmitted to the individual. The individual acquire and uphold them with the results that he/she conducts himself/herself in a socially acceptable manner, and on the basis of which he/she functions adequately socially (Louw,1991: 458-460).

For visually impaired adolescents a major factor is usually the lack of eye contact which makes communication more difficult and which can hinder the development of friendships. To a greater extent they are disillusioned by the treatment they received from their family members, teachers and peers. The dysfunctional families are also highlighted by McGaha and Leon (1995: 475) and Mason et. al. (1997: 112-113) who explain this as the failure of parents to provide consistent love, nurturing, neglect of physical and emotional needs.

Poor interpersonal relationship made the daily life experiences of visually impaired adolescents difficult and intolerable. This social aspect at times was so severed that it led to serious problems.

Example:

"Everybody avoided me wherever I go. At school it became so unbearable and I could not stomach it. I eventually left the school and stayed at home. My parents didn't do anything about it.

Nobody wanted to help me and nobody wanted me in their company. I felt terrible inside.”

Another adolescent said:

“Sometimes I thought of committing suicide because it was the only way I could escape from such loneliness. One day I took a bottle of battery acid with the aim of drinking it and taking my own life. The reason for this was that nobody wanted me. I didn’t find the reason for living. In fact there was nothing to live for.”

These two examples presented here are what social rejection can do to the visually impaired adolescents. Rejection has considerable psychological importance, because this experience happens as part of ongoing relationships that are expected to be supportive, protective and nurturing. These adolescents are from neglected families and grew up in an environment that failed to provide consistent and appropriate opportunities that guide development, instead they are placed in jeopardy of physical and emotional harm. In its extreme form, rejection can be accompanied by a feeling of blackest depression, and sometimes thoughts of suicide.

Suicidal thoughts are a way of expressing ones need for profound change of state, Suicide is ranked the third highest cause of death amongst older adolescents. This is supported by Wilks (1998: 165), Gillis (1992: 161) and Wolfe (1999: 33).

The other respondent said:

“I was living with my grandparents. In 1991, my grandmother, the person who was taking care of me passed away. Thereafter I experienced lots of problems. There was no money for my eye treatment. Nobody wanted to take care of me. I was on my own. Life was not somehow enjoyable.”

Some of the events to be instrumental in precipitating suicide attempts are denigration or loss of self-respect in front of friends, parental rejection, death of some close, feeling of social isolation and extreme pressure at home.

This is supported by Warren (1997: 109) when he further states that a person with low-self-esteem views himself/herself as deficient and inadequate, although it is unclear as to whether low self-esteem is causal factor or symptom of depression. Disconnected family relationships have resulted in fear and disillusionment among the respondents. What is important is that it should be taken into consideration that the self-esteem emerges from interpersonal relationships. In relationships that are disintegrating, there is a mounting level of anxiety that is shared by a person and significant others - family members friends and others. Beeber (1996: 154-155) and Warren (1997: 109) support this

Most of the visually impaired adolescents interviewed felt desperately, lonely, ruined and in deepest despair (Younger, 1995:59). In their suffering these adolescents see themselves as abandoned and forsaken by everyone. What actually gave them life and its meaning has become empty and hollow.

### **3.4.3 EXPERIENCES OF STIGMATIZED VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS**

People who are rejected tend to be stigmatized and distanced by others primarily because of the labels imposed on them by others. Furthermore people tend unconsciously or consciously to view the difference in stigmatized individuals in undesirable terms. According to Gaffman (in Lewis, Lewis, Daniels & D'Andrea, 1998: 173), this sense of undesirability is often rooted in the belief that stigmatized individuals are not competent, are inferior to non-stigmatized people and are by definition not quite human beings.



Example:

“They have given me names which I don’t like. I can’t understand why do they see me through my impairment. I felt a different person ..... I’m not a human being.”

Labels are a form of prejudice. When you break down the word “prejudice”, you get pre-judge. When somebody is labelled, he/she is pre-judged, meaning that you are making conclusion about someone without knowing him/her.

The respondent eventually came to accept the labels as being a valid assessment of his capabilities, and consequently make a little effort to improve.

The other respondent said:

“They used to call me “Squinty” or “Miss Four-Eyes” because I am squinted and I put on spectacles. I did not like those names because they were not my real names.”

When an individual suffers from some disability or impairment, whether mental or physical, he/she is labelled as such. Almond (in Lewis et. al, 1998: 173) describes the process by which individuals are labelled as deviant and therefore stigmatized and devalued. Covey (1998: 92) supports this statement and further states that if a person has been falsely labelled he/she can live with it. The real danger comes when the person starts to believe the labels himself/herself, because labels are just like paradigms. What you see is what you get. Our paradigms, correct or incorrect are sources of our attitudes and ultimately our relationships with others.

One respondent revealed how she was humiliated by her sighted peers at school and in the township where she lives.

"I attended the normal school and the pupils there used to tease me and called me by names. The most hurting one was "Double Lens" because I am putting on spectacles with double lenses. They have composed a song about the name and some words go this way: "Double Lens, Double Dutch, one big owl ....." Wherever they see me, they sing that song. I eventually left the school."

The loss of confidence which resulted from the continued failure to meet expectations accompanied by negative reactions from the peers and others, often in the form of ridicule resulted in emotional problems which led the respondent to leave that school.

Some respondents attribute their problems to poor understanding of their condition by the people with whom they live. The latter is supported by the following extract:

"Most children and parents don't like me because I'm suffering from albinism and I'm also visually impaired. They always tease me and call me horrible names which I am not prepared to mention. It sometimes hurt to be called by names which have to do with your disability or impairment. I can't change my present physical status."

Their unique differences from the people in the mainstream of society became viewed as overriding conditions, emphasized to the point that those differences frequently become a focus of their lives. Similar forms of stigmatizing and labelling occur as a result of racial and cultural stereotyping. This is supported by Lewis et. al (1998: 173-174).

Another visually impaired adolescent said:

"I spend most of my time in the house. I am afraid to go outside or to play with my peers because I don't want to be called names which make me feel ashamed of myself."

Visually impaired adolescents felt ashamed of themselves and the stigma attached to them as individuals. This is supported by Younger (1995: 61) and he further states that an experience of shame is isolating, highly personal and results in feeling of loss of control, inferiority, abandonment and rejection.

What is exposed in shame is oneself, that is "I am ashamed of what I am". Shame is the pain of feeling unloved and unlovable. Shame and stigmatization were common expressions during this interview.

#### **3.4.4 EXPERIENCES OF PHYSICAL ABUSE OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS**

Beckman (in Le Roux (ed), 1994: 228) defines physical abuse as a repulsive act committed by an adult and directed at a defenceless child who ought to be protected rather than abused. Swanepoel (1992: 136-137) further suggests that abuse is all the more repulsive because an older and stronger deliberately harms a young defenceless person. It is particularly odious when the offender, that is the perpetrator is supposed to be the specific child's custodian, caretaker and protector.

Some of the visually impaired adolescents experienced physical abuse at school. This is evidenced by the following extracts from the transcription.

"I always had difficulties in reading and writing. My teachers didn't care about these problems. I just carried instructions from my teachers without questioning them. Once I start questioning them I was in big trouble. To play safe I had to do what I was told to do and nothing else irrespective of the difficulties I had to go through in the classroom."

The other one said:

"I was the youngest in the class of the sighted learners. Being visually impaired I had difficulties in doing my work in the

classroom. My teacher used to hit me quite often because she was not so much interested in my impairment.”

In their respective roles as the learners’ educators and guardians teachers appear to be best placed to assure the safety of all learners in regard to abuse. Moreover, one of the enshrined rights of the child in the country’s constitution is his/her right to psycho-physical integrity to be protected against mental and bodily harm. Instead of upholding this noble profession they abuse their powers and authority.

Hence the visually impaired tend to be most vulnerable to physical assaults at school than their sighted counterparts. The reason being that they are less able to defend themselves and are perceived as soft targets by perpetrators. This is supported by Pava (1994: 103-112).

It is not only at school where abuse takes place. Even some of them are subjected into abuse at their respective homes by their family members. The latter is supported by the following extract:

“We are staying in the rural area where there is no electricity. When food has to be cooked,, fire has to be made outside the house. My aunt always pick on me to make the fire. Mind you, I am visually impaired and by making fire could put my life at risk. When I try to beg her to instruct others to do that, she would take a piece of hose-pipe and bit me with it. I used to cry a lot because I was powerless and defenceless.

One of the adolescents who is visually impaired was abandoned by his biological mother at the age of 10.

“I last saw my mother, my biological mother in 1992 when I was ten years old. Nobody has ever told me her whereabouts and why she left me with my abusive aunt who likes to beat me whenever she is angry with something.”

Physical abuse and neglect appeared to be mediated by several major environmental conditions of which socio-economic status plays an important role. A well-established finding is that maltreatment is more common among the poor and disadvantaged especially for child neglect (Drake & Pandey, 1996: 1003-1018).

The adolescents who are visually impaired in these families suffered neglect and abuse. They have grown up in poverty which has a substantial effect on well-being of children and adolescents. This is supported by Brooks - Gunn & Duncan (1997: 55-71).

### **3.5 FIELD NOTES**

Field notes will be described according to the different stages of data collection.

#### **3.5.1 APPOINTMENTS**

The researcher did experience practical problems with the initial setting of appointment dates. Learners were to write the quarterly tests and the principal was out of the country. In the afternoon learners were to attend the drum majorettes practice, in preparation for competitions to be held during September holidays.

The researcher had to postpone all appointment dates to the September holidays.

#### **3.5.2 INTERVIEWS**

The respondents were prepared to talk about their life experiences during the initial stage, enough time was spent with the group explaining the interview to them. The consent letters where the purpose of the study is explained was written in Braille and each and every participant was given a copy to facilitate the process of explanation.

After the initial contact respondents had a time interval of a week, sufficient enough to pose any misunderstanding to the researcher, before the appointment date. The participant did not necessarily sign the Braille-written consents.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher using an audio-tape. The interviews were conducted in English. Transcriptions were done by the researcher. The researcher spent more time in listening to the audio-tapes as words were to be written in verbatim to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness of the data.

### **3.5.3 METHODOLOGICAL NOTES**

The method used to clear confusion on the topic of the research study was that of describing the topic clearly, to keep the respondents focused.

Communication techniques were used in their simplest form in order to minimize the researcher talking too much and interfering with the interviewees' ventilation.

There were many interruptions experienced in the interviews, despite efforts taken to minimize them. The researcher had to remind the respondents that he was the one who facilitated the process and respondents had to give each other a chance to talk. In some recordings, there was a lot of noise from learners moving in the corridor and playing in the adjacent block. Fortunately that did not affect the sound of the audio-tapes.

### **3.5.4 PERSONAL NOTES**

The researcher was to a certain extent tense and anxious because it was his first experience to work with adolescents with visual impairment. The researcher tried everything possible to concentrate on creating and ensuring an atmosphere conducive for respondents to be free to interact and ventilate without any fear of victimization.

In some instances during the interview the researcher experienced anxiety from efforts made during the interview to bracket his own experiences and emotions, especially when respondents ventilate experiences which were touchy or sensitive to him.

### **3.5.5 DATA ANALYSIS**

English made it easier for both the researcher and the independent coder. The consensus discussion was conclusive for both the researcher and the independent coder and minor dissimilarities were experienced.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

In response to the central question: "Tell me your life experiences as a visually impaired adolescent" a rich description of adolescents' experiences of their life world was made available from the data obtained. The data was developed into one theme with four categories illustrating the visually impaired adolescents' description of their experiences.

The first category dealt with experience of confused self-perception which was viewed by the visually impaired adolescent as an obstacle in their life world. Experience of confused self-perception has resulted in these adolescents not to be regarded as human beings, not being part of their peers and not being respected by their sighted fellow human beings.

The second category describes the experience of social rejection of the visually impaired adolescents which led to the loss of personal worth as valued unique individuals in their immediate environment. Experience of social rejection relates to them as being humiliated and neglected by their family members, neighbors, teachers and peers resulting into poor communication and having poor interpersonal relationships. Eventually they failed to express their needs as human beings. One of them nearly committed suicide because of frustration.

The third category describes experience of stigmatization of the visually impaired adolescents which relates to being teased, called unacceptable,

dehumanizing names, being labelled and shunned. All these created a feeling of shame and bitterness among them. Most of them had to drop from mainstream schools.

The fourth one is physical abuse. It describes how the visually adolescents were maltreated by their family members and teachers. Consequently they ended not trusting them. It was the result of lack of support from both teachers and family members to assure them safety in regard to abuse.

Therefore it is in the light of these findings that the guidelines will be described to support the helpless, frustrated and confused visually impaired adolescents in their quest for coping regardless of their physical status.





## **CHAPTER 4**

### **GUIDELINES, LIMITATIONS. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter three the results of the research study were discussed and compared with relevant literature. In this concluding chapter, guidelines will be described to assist the visually impaired adolescents to cope and lead a meaningful life regardless of their physical status. A literature control will be done to validate and verify the proposed guidelines for this study. Some practical problems encountered during the conduct and execution of the study will be described. Thereafter conclusions and recommendations will be presented.

The visually impaired adolescents who participated in this research related their experiences as being regarded inferior human beings and being constantly frustrated and humiliated by peers, neighbors, teachers and in other instances by family members. They demonstrated in their ventilation that adolescents who are visually impaired who live in non-supportive environment are more vulnerable to adversities affecting their self-perception.

Under such conditions they found themselves alone, hurt, bitter, helpless, frustrated and insecure. They are overpowered by the problems they encounter on daily basis and they are unable to bring about changes in such circumstances. With the formulated guidelines, the researcher tries to explore opportunities that will facilitate and enable the visually impaired adolescents towards having a better understanding of themselves and their relationships with others so that they will be able to cope and meet the challenges in their life-world.

## **4.2 GUIDELINES FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS TO COPE IN THEIR LIFE-WORLD.**

The guidelines are based on the theme from phenomenological interviews and observations of visually impaired adolescents ( see table 3.1 p. 33).

Visually impaired adolescents experiencing themselves as inferior human being, forms the basis for the formulation of guidelines for this research studies. The findings of this study have , therefore, note-worthy implications for teachers and guidance teachers in particular as they are the available resources for assisting adolescents who are visually impaired to cope and lead a meaningful life regardless of their physical status. A visually impaired adolescent in this study is viewed as a whole person who is a spiritual being and functions in an integrated bio-psychosocial manner to achieve his/her quest for wholeness.

The common interactive patterns of experience within the visually impaired adolescents consisted of loneliness , withdrawal, unhappiness and insecurity. It is considered that the experience of confused self-perception of a visually impaired adolescents led to a feeling to helplessness, hopelessness and a sense of not being worthy. It is important that during the helping process the teacher or guidance teacher view the visually impaired adolescent holistically (Theory of Health Promotion in Nursing 1999: 4) as body, mind and spirit who function in an integrated, interactive manner with the environment.

In this way the visually impaired adolescents' difficulties related to experience of confused self-conception, experience of social rejection, experience of stigmatization and abuse can be minimized. All these factors are interrelated and have a bearing on each other. An appropriate intervention strategy should, therefore, be put into practice in order to improve self-perception, socialization, hope, confidence and security.

The following guidelines are suggested for use by teachers and guidance teachers in assisting adolescents who are visually impaired to cope and lead a meaningful life irrespective of their physical status.

#### **4.2.1 SELF-PERCEPTION OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS**

Adolescence is a very crucial stage in the formation and the overall development of self-perception. The physical changes of adolescent's experiences, cultural and social expectations he/she faces and the psychological changes he/she undergoes have an important implications for his/her self-perception. It is sometimes difficult for adolescents, who, in addition to the normal quota of self-doubt and uncertainty, have visual impairment. Therefore the process of establishing an identity is determined to a great extent by the way we relate to, and influenced by those around us (Mason et. al, 1997: 110).

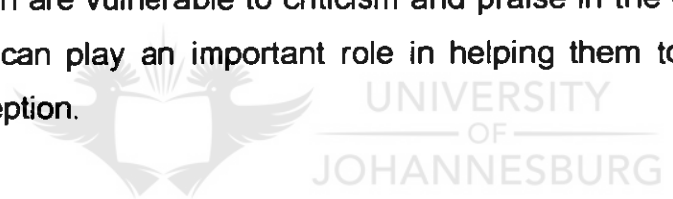
Adolescents who are fully sighted learn a great deal of what is expected of them by observation of the behavior of others and a lack of sight can make the process of adolescence more difficult than it might otherwise be. Most personality theorists and research workers agree on the role of significant others, particularly parents, being an influential source of information about oneself. Significant others play a crucial role in the concepts the child acquires about himself/herself. Therefore a person is not born with a self-concept, but forms one as a result of interaction with the environment. In this way the self-concept can be described as a picture that an individual forms of himself/herself from his/her interaction with experiences in his/her environment. If the interactions are favorable to him/her, then he/she is inclined to think favorable of himself/herself, and vice-versa.

##### **4.2.1.1 ENHANCING SELF-PERCEPTION**

It is the task of teachers and guidance teachers to facilitate the development of positive self-perception among learners who are visually impaired. The following are some hints of enhancing self-perception (Gillis 1992: 80-81). The teacher and guidance teacher should:

- Build a caring, personal relationship and encourage an environment conducive to acceptance and optimism. Visually impaired adolescents more than anything else need to feel that they are considered sufficiently worthwhile to merit the teachers special attention, genuine respect and appreciation.
- Use every opportunity to accentuate the positive. The aim is to boost the adolescents' morale by focusing on existing strengths, rather than to work on improving the present inadequacies.
- Provide numerous opportunities for success setting goals which are relatively easily achievable. At the end of the day discuss and record details of all successes achieved.
- Reward any attempt at positive achievements with generous approval, because adolescents suffering from low and confused self-perception are uncertain of themselves. Therefore it is essential they perceive the approval as genuine appreciation for attaining their goals rather than simply encouragement or reassurance.
- Encourage them to change negative self-thinking attitude such as "I can't", "I am not capable" to "I can" and "I'm capable". They must know that people are ordinary but they can create an extraordinary life for themselves by living out their dreams and striving always to live life to the fullest (Eischhorst, 2001: 11-12).
- Use modelling, role play and assertiveness training to reinforce feelings of confidence in their ability to achieve.
- Teach problem-solving skills.
- As helping others is morale-building, encourage them to assist others even if they are for a younger age group in some activities.

- When peers are around, try to include activities which the visually impaired adolescent is competent at, as praise from peers, or given in front of peers, is especially effective in enhancing self-perception.
- Initiate pride in a mutual project with family members, or with sighted friends, in this way signalling acceptance of the visually impaired adolescent as a “member of the team” who has much value to contribute.
- Arrange for more responsibility to be assumed at home, even if this involves minor activities, for example, watering the garden or feeding the dog.
- Enlist the assistance of the class teacher or subject teachers. Adolescents who are visually impaired and suffering from confused self-conception are vulnerable to criticism and praise in the classroom, and teachers can play an important role in helping them to improve their self-perception.



#### **4.2.2. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS**

There are three interdependent strands in the social and emotional development of adolescents, namely, personality, relationship and moral reasoning. Adolescents are expected to develop as far as possible the ability to make informed choices or decisions for themselves, to develop a positive sense of identity and to establish peer relationships in order to progress to independent adulthood (Mason et. al., 1999: 112).

For adolescents with visual impairment, there are a number of factors that may affect the ease with which these aims are achieved. The major problem is the lack of eye contact which makes communication more difficult and which can also hinder the development of friendships. According to Long and Fogell (1999: 115) poor social skills will almost certainly lead individuals having poor self-esteem. They further state that

social "know how" is about getting our needs met without causing problems to others. Therefore these skills can be learnt.

According to Steenkamp and Steenkamp (1992: 29-30) an important aspect of role in life is social adaptability. The special school learner must therefore be primarily educated to be socially acceptable. It means that he/she must be able as far as possible to meet the social norms of the society in which he/she find himself/herself. The visually adolescent is unable to identify and maintain these norms unaided. Therefore he/she must be led to this goal by means of a thoroughly considered curriculum and a carefully planned and developed training programmes. The society in which he/she lives will ignore or accept academic inadequacy but not the gross flouting of social norms.

According to Erikson, as quoted by Bee (in Mason et. al., 1999: 113) described the main focus of adolescence as being the acquisition of a sense of identity while fending off a sense of confusion. Without legitimate opportunities to exercise control and make decisions for themselves, adolescents who are visually impaired may choose an unhealthy and ultimately unsatisfying way of expressing their personality. Visually impaired adolescent benefit from an environment in which constructive criticism and positive feedback are key elements. They actually look forward to feel valued and appreciated, but also need to have a measure by which to gauge their own performance, behavior and opportunities to show initiative, take responsibility and make decisions about their own learning.

Therefore the visually impaired adolescent must acquire the knowledge which will allow him/her to live a socially acceptable and less dependent life. Social development is therefore aimed to help the adolescent to develop specific behavior patterns which are acceptable to society. He/she must learn to communicate effectively, to respect the rights and property of others, to develop an understanding of the demands and responsibilities of citizenship and must become aware of himself/herself as a member of a group with common interest. These tentative experience

and perception of a group are a means of preparing the visually adolescent for his/her entry into adulthood life.

**Coleman's (1998: 318) adaptation includes the following five basic emotional and social competencies:**

- **Self-awareness:** Knowledge of what one is feeling in a moment, and applying those preferences to guide one's decision-making, having a realistic assessment of one's own abilities and well-grounded sense of self-confidence.
- **Self-regulation:** Handling one's emotions so that they facilitate rather than interfere with the task at hand; being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals; recovering well from emotional distress.
- **Motivation:** This aspect encompasses the using of our deepest preference to move and guide our goals, to help us take initiative and strive to improve, and to persevere in the face of setbacks and frustrations.
- **Empathy:** This allows us to sense what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective and cultivating rapport and attunement with a broad diversity of people.
- **Social skills:** Being able to handle emotions in relationships well and accurately reading social situations and networks; interacting smoothly; using these skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes for cooperation and teamwork.

However, development in social skills can succeed only if the visually impaired adolescents experience their social environment with emotional ease, equilibrium and control. Uncontrolled emotional outbursts are offensive and must be avoided. The personality development of the adolescent is included in this goal (Steenkamp & Steenkamp, 1992: 30).

Another area of considering to overcome social rejection and stigmatization is to include the visually impaired adolescents in sighted counterparts' recreational activities. In general visually impaired adolescents are inclined to be physically passive. This is because they are frightened of hurting themselves, especially in unfamiliar surroundings. The teacher or the guidance teacher will have to put more effort into making them physically active. Recreational skills should be purpose-designed for and taught to blind and partially sighted learners and these should become lifelong skills.

Block (1994: 20-21) sketches the following advantages for visually impaired learners who participate in recreational activities with sighted learners.

- They have the opportunity to learn social skills in a natural environment. This includes learning natural cues and consequences, like waiting their turn and what happens if they don't.
- They are in a more stimulating and motivating environment.
- They have an opportunity to acquire appropriate social skills like how to greet people, what to wear and so on.
- They are exposed to appropriate peer role models who are not impaired.
- They can participate in activities which match their age and social circle, like eating out, attending sports meetings, music art and others.
- Parents of visually impaired learners, teachers and other parents interact better.
- Ordinary learners' attitude to visually impaired learners may improve meaning that there may be less teasing and fewer negative comments.



- Learners without disabilities learn to appreciate differences between people and to see strengths and weaknesses in everyone.

#### **4.3 PRACTICAL PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AND LIMITATIONS**

It was somehow difficult for the researcher to start immediately with the research because the school was busy with quarterly test and preparations for the drum majorette competitions which were to take place during the September holidays. Most of the participants were also involved in the preparations which eventually led the researcher to postpone the interviews.

During the September holidays, sessions were divided into two being the morning session and afternoon sessions. Morning sessions were devoted to interviews and afternoon sessions were for competition preparations. The researcher's problem was also transport. The train was the only means of the researcher's transport to get to his destination, which to a greater extent created problems because it sometimes arrived late at the place where interviews were to be held. There were times when the researcher had to hike in order to arrive on time at the school.

Another problem encountered was that the research found some problems with regard to communication. The most difficult part was their body language which seemed to create anxiety and confusion to the researcher.

Indeed talking at too great a length without pause had been another hazard for the young person whose blindness or severe visual impairment rendered him/her unaware of warning signs of irritation or boredom from his/her listeners. What the researcher realized was that the interaction in conversation demanded a maturity and awareness that may not be easy to achieve particularly with visually impaired. Eventually the researcher had to learn more of the participants' way of communication particularly their body language.

Lastly, in view of the study's limitations, one cannot conclude that the findings are absolute. The reasons behind this statement are that the interviews were carried out on only one school of the visual impaired learners. However, the findings of this study are significant in that they shed light in the confusion and frustration suffered by the visually impaired adolescent.

#### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This study arose from the following observations:

- That there is more evidence that adolescents who are having difficulty with their vision experience their lives as inferior compared to their sighted counterparts.
- That a study was needed to be conducted which would highlight the life world of the visually impaired adolescents themselves rather than the experience as told by family members, peers, neighbors or teachers.

The purpose of this study was twofold. Firstly, it was to explore and describe the life world of visually impaired adolescents. Secondly, it was to describe the guidelines for visually impaired adolescents to cope and lead a meaningful life irrespective of their physical status.

The central questions asked for this research study were:

- What are the life experiences of the visually impaired adolescents?
- How do they feel about their experiences?
- How can the obtained information be utilized to describe the guidelines to assist the visually impaired adolescents to cope and lead a meaningful life.

The researcher used the qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design to find relevant and appropriate answers to these questions. In-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted with visually impaired adolescents who met the sample criteria of this research study. The results of both the phenomenological interviews conducted indicate the occurrence of negative experiences in their life. One main theme was identified, namely, experience of confused self-perception among the visually impaired adolescents.

With the suggested guidelines it is believed and hoped that visually impaired adolescents will be assisted to cope and lead a meaningful life irrespective of their physical status.

#### **4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations stated here are based on the findings of the research study and will be made with specific reference to parental involvement, training of teachers, inclusion and education research.

##### **4.5.1 PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

The results of this study have pointed out the impact of parents' failure to be involved in the internal and external experiences of their visually impaired children. Therefore, in order to promote, maintain and restore coping skills of visually impaired adolescents living under humiliating conditions; it is imperative to involve parents because charity begins at home.

They can play an important role in their adolescents' life world. Teachers will have to start by accepting the principle that parents have the right to be involved in their children's life world. We must realize that when the parents and the family members are well informed, they are in a far better position to support the visually impaired adolescent, than any other person or agency.

Thus, since there is no longer any doubt about the merits of parental involvement in the experiences of visually impaired adolescents the main question is how it ought to be done. One method of approach will not be sufficient in all circumstances. What will work in one area, such as rural area may not be applicable in urban areas. However the following three principles should be applied in all circumstances (Hegarty, 1990: 25).

- **Empowering parents:** This entails sharing information with them, that is information about the adolescent's condition, the findings of the evaluation, the teaching programme that is envisaged, the facilities that are available, and the adolescent's future possibilities.

It is therefore expected from teachers and other professionals who work with the adolescents to respect parents, have confidence in the contributions they can make and give them guidance on what they can do to help their adolescents to cope.

- **Changing the role of professionals:** Teachers and professionals who work with visually impaired adolescents should not think they are the only ones with expertise. They often work in voluntary isolation involving secrecy about what they are doing and how they do it. These individuals need to relinquish this position and learn to discuss their assistance to those adolescents with parents and other interested parties in a friendly, simple way so that more people can become involved.
- Working towards community participation is vitally important. Community participation has been the target area for the past years in the education of the visually impaired adolescents, particularly in the developing countries. This is an indication that it has been realized that communities have considerable resources which can be put to better use. Not only should the existing services of Department of Education, Health and Labor be reciprocated, but the expertise of parents and other members of the community should be put to optimal use in

educating these adolescents. It must be realized that communities form homogeneous groups that can do a great deal to support one another.

- Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that members of any healthy community are interested in the welfare of their children. They realize that the quality of their children will determine the quality of their future communities. Generally speaking most communities are usually willing to become involved not only in giving their services through education but also in making many sacrifices for their children.

#### **4.5.2 TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

The development in the field of specialized education depend largely on the quality of the training that teachers have received for their task. At the time in which education policy has drastically changed, it is important to provide in-service teacher training. This kind of training is important in countries where teachers do not have a good quality basic or pre-service training, and where the initial training did not include a substantial component on learners with special educational needs.

It should however be taken into consideration that it is not just some teachers who need this training. All teachers need it, particularly those in the primary schools. It should be the responsibility of the principals to organize some compulsory informal workshops in their respective schools, such as one afternoon once a month during which various aspects of visual disabilities can be discussed and where teachers can share their problems with one another.

#### **4.5.3 INCLUSION**

The philosophy behind inclusion is that the society consists with a diversity of cultures, languages, race, gender, abilities and temperaments. When all is said and done, no two individuals are the same. Therefore one is not better than the other. All are people and all have the right to be part of the society. For this reason they have to be accepted and accommodated

with tolerance. In short, to be realistic, a society which excludes certain persons is not "normal" because it does not reflect the full range of diversity (Rankin et. al., 1994: 237; Burden, 1996: 45; Meyer et. al, 1994; Jenkins & Sileo, 1994: 16).

Children with disabilities also form part of any normal community and thus of a normal education community as well.

The motives of inclusion are about a specific view of people, specific attitudes and value systems (Hilton & Smith, 1994: 253). It is a reaction against existing discriminatory practices. It is so easy to attach "labels" to people, thereby, as it were, expressing a value judgement about them. For example, they may be called "mentally disabled", "visually disabled" "educationally disadvantaged", they may be consigned to one or other minority group and so on (Jenkins & Sileo, 1994: 84). The implication is that they are "different" and therefore "not one of us" or "not normal". Such an attitude like this may even conceal a hidden superiority, an attitude of "after all, they are not worth as much as we are". Even though these attitudes may not be expressed, they are nevertheless insinuated.

The outcome of these discriminatory practices is that those who do not belong to the "normal" are often kept "separate" - disabled children are obliged to receive "separate" education. In this way individuals who do not belong to the "normal" groups are excluded from ordinary experiences of life.

Those who advocate the principle of inclusion, like to use the concept "Education for All" to emphasize this idea. In addition they naturally reject any type of labelling concepts.

Ainscow (1992: 2) maintains that inclusion introduces an entirely new understanding of education in general and the education of learners with special educational needs in particular. He also asserts that the old system "... not only works to the disadvantages of particular pupils but also acts as a barrier to overall school improvement". Rankin et. al. (1994:

235) states that “ Inclusion, for us, is a carefully planned programme that brings out the best in general and special educators, general and special education students, and general and special education parents as they work together for the good of everyone.”

Phillip et. al. (1995: 262) explains that a shift in terms from mainstream to inclusion marks a dramatic shift in thinking about serving the needs of all the learners. Therefore disability may arise from the inability of a society to adapt to the needs and aspiration of the disabled person, rather than from the inability of the disabled person to adapt to the society.

#### **4.5.4 RESEARCH**

There is a need to conduct a further research based on the identified patterns of interactions between the external and internal environment of the visually impaired adolescents' life world to understand their experiences in a different context or on whether the guidelines provided in this research study were effective in improving the coping ability of the visually impaired adolescents.

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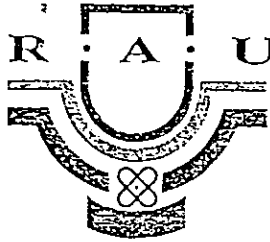
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**ANNEXURE 1:**

**REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO CONDUCT  
RESEARCH**



RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY  
P.O. Box 524  
Auckland Park  
Johannesburg  
Republic of South Africa  
2006



RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY  
Telegraphic address Rauniv  
Telex 424526 SA  
Telephone (011) 489-2911  
+ 27-11-489-2911  
Fax (011) 489-2191  
+ 27-11-489-2191

8 June 2001

The Principal  
Sibonile School for the Blind  
P O Box 534  
KLIPRIVIER  
1871

Sir

#### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am a M.Ed Adolescent Guidance student at the Rand Afrikaans University, Auckland Park, Johannesburg. I am presently engaged in a research study entitled "THE LIFE WORLD OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS".

This study is conducted under the supervision of professors CPH Myburgh and M Poggenpoel of the Faculty of Education and Nursing.

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Nursing of the Rand Afrikaans University.

The objectives of the study are to:

- explore and describe the life world of the visually impaired adolescents ;
- describe guidelines to assist them on how to cope and lead an meaningful life.

To complete this research study, I need to conduct interviews with these adolescents. The interview, which will run for about 45 to 60 minutes, will be audiotaped for verification of finding by my supervisors and an independent coder.

The name and dignity of each adolescent will be preserved by observing the following ethical standards through out the research process:



2.

- voluntary participation and freedom to withdraw without penalty
- informed consent;
- to omit their names and their school during the discussions related to the studies;
- by observing confidentiality by keeping all raw materials under lock and key;
- the information related to the interview will not be accessible to no one else except for my supervisors and the independent coder;
- my contact address and telephone numbers will be provided for case participants need to discuss matters arising from the study;
- field notes will be destroyed and audiotapes erased as soon as it is conveniently possible;
- the summary of the research study will be made available to participants if they so wish and
- the participants are assured the freedom to participate or not to and this means that can terminate at any time they feel necessary to do so.

Their participation in this study will benefit other adolescents who have similar problems in their life world and as individuals they will discover their potentials and will be enriched for having participated in the interview.

Yours faithfully



UNIVERSITY  
OF  
JOHANNESBURG

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. N. Thahane', written over a dotted line.

LN THAHANE  
M.Ed/M.Phil (Adolescent Guidance)  
RESEARCHER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. P. H. Myburgh', written over a dotted line.

PROF CPH MYBURGH  
H.ED; B.SC; B.SC (HONS); M.COM; B.ED; M.ED; D.ED  
SUPERVISOR

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marie Poggenpoel', written over a dotted line.

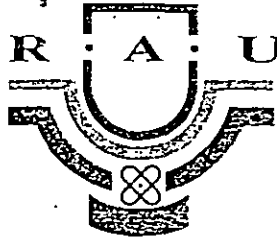
PROF M POGGENPOEL  
R.N. ; Ph.D  
CO-SUPERVISOR

**ANNEXURE 2:**

**REQUEST FOR CONSENT FROM  
PARTICIPANTS**



RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY  
P.O. Box 524  
Auckland Park  
Johannesburg  
Republic of South Africa  
2006



RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY  
Telegraphic address Rauniv  
Telex 424526 SA  
Telephone (011) 489-2911  
+ 27-11-489-2911  
Fax (011) 489-2191  
+ 27-11-489-2191

8 June 2001

Dear Respondents

#### REQUEST FOR CONSENT FROM PARTICIPANTS

I am a M.Ed (Adolescent Guidance) student at the Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, presently engaged in a research project entitled "THE LIFE WORLD OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS".

This study is to be conducted at your school if possible under the supervision of professors CPH Myburgh and M Poggenpoel of the Faculty of Education and Nursing of the Rand Afrikaans University.

This study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education and Nursing of the Rand Afrikaans University.

The objects of this study are:

- to explore and describe life world of visually impaired adolescents, and
- to describe guidelines to assist them on how to cope and lead a meaningful life.

To complete this study, I need to conduct interviews of approximately 45 to 60 minutes, which will be audiotaped, transcribed verbatim and verified with you and an independent expert. In this regard, I undertake to safeguard your anonymity by omitting the use of your names and that of the institution. Confidentiality will be ensured by erasing the taped information on completion of transcribing the tapes.


2.

The transcribed taped materials will only be shared between the independent expert and the researcher. Informed consent will be sought from you or your parents/guardians for these proceedings and you will deserve the right to withdraw or terminate participation in the study at any stage of the study. Your participation is strictly voluntarily, failure to comply will not result in any penalty because you are participating under no obligation in this study.

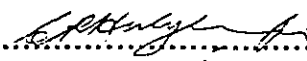
The direct and immediate benefit to you in this study is that you will have the opportunity to ventilate or verbalize your life world. Long-term benefits are that the research findings of your life world will assist the researcher in formulating guidelines to be used to assist you cope and lead a meaningful life regardless of your health status.

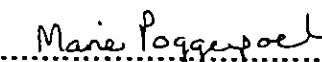
For any further information on your participation or research study contact the researcher on (016) 451-2383 (W); (016) 455-1175 (H).


A summary of the research findings will be made available for your personal if you so wish.

  
.....  
**LN THAHANE**  
**M.Ed/M.Phil (Adolescent Guidance)**  
**RESEARCHER**

  
**UNIVERSITY**  
**OF**  
**JOHANNESBURG**

  
.....  
**PROF CPH MYBURGH**  
**H.ED; B.SC; B.SC (HONS); M.COM; B.ED; M.ED; D.ED**  
**SUPERVISOR**

  
.....  
**PROF M POGGENPOEL**  
**R.N. ; Ph.D**  
**CO-SUPERVISOR**



**ANNEXURE 3:**  
**REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE AS AN  
INDEPENDENT CODER**

UNIVERSITY  
OF  
JOHANNESBURG

P.O.Box 194  
VEREENIGING  
1930

26 October 2001

RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND NURSING SCIENCE  
P.O.BOX 524  
AUCKLAND PARK  
2006

Mrs S. Lenkoane

**REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE AS AN INDEPENDENT CODER**

I am requesting your assistance as an independent coder for my study.

The topic for this research study is "THE LIFE-WORLD OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED ADOLESCENTS: AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE."

I would like you kindly to arrange time convenient to you for our discussion.

Please find herein enclosed the protocol for coding.

Thanking you in advance.

L.N. THAHANE  
M. ED. STUDENT (PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

## ANNEXURE 4:



**PROTOCOL FOR CODER**

## **PROTOCOL INDEPENDENT CODER**

Dear Mrs Lenkoane

Please use the protocol to analyse data form transcribed interviews conducted with visually impaired adolescents.

1. Read through all transcripts carefully using intuiting and "bracketing" to get the sense of the whole. Intuiting means focusing on the life-world of adolescents who are visually impaired and bracketing means placing preconceived ideas within brackets.
2. Do the same with field notes.
3. As you read through the data identify major categories.
4. Underline units of meaning related to the major categories.
5. Check all transcripts and indicate in each category how many respondents used similar words.
6. Identify data according to their relationship.

Thanking you in advance.



L.N. THAHANE  
M.ED. STUDENT (PSYCHO-EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)





**ANNEXURE 5:**

**RESPONSE FROM THE PRINCIPAL OF  
SIBONILE SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND**

# SIBONILE SCHOOL

For visually impaired pupils

PO Box 534  
KLIPRIVIER  
1871

Tel/Fax: [011] 9038909

E-mail: [sibonile@iafrica.com](mailto:sibonile@iafrica.com)

Fundraising No: 01 101346 000 4

NPO Reg No: 004 664

21 August 2001

**ATTENTION: The Senior Manager, D7  
Mr L.W.C. Henderson**

Dear Sir

**RE: Request from RAU student, Mr LN Thahane, to do research at Sibonile School**

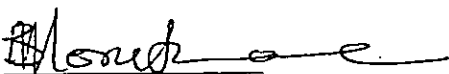
Please find attached to this letter a copy of the above- mentioned request.

The matter was discussed with and approved by our SMT as well as the Executive committee of the SGB, based on the undertakings/ conditions made in the mentioned letter.

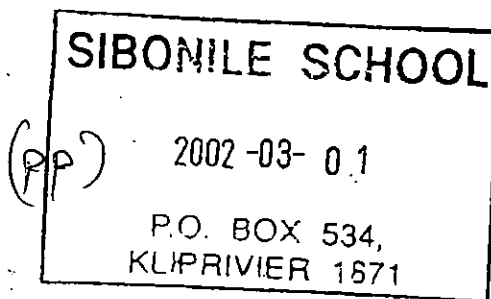
Five learners will be interviewed after school hours during the following few weeks in order to meet the objectives of the study.

We hope you will also find this in order, enabling Mr Thahane to complete his research, **and wish to receive confirmation of your approval or not as soon as possible.**

Sincerely yours.



C van der Merwe  
PRINCIPAL



## **ANNEXURE 6:**

### **EXAMPLE OF ONE TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW**



## EXAMPLE OF ONE TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

NB. INT. STANDS FOR INTERVIEWER,  
RES. STANDS FOR RESPONDENT

INT: Tell me your life experiences as a visually impaired adolescent.

RES: I have gone through hard times.

INT: Can you please explain what do you mean when you talk about hard times?

RES: Well, as a visually impaired person, I attended a normal school, that is, a school catering for the sighted learners, Everything started well and it did not take a long time before I became used to the school.

INT: Mh!

RES: Then one day, during lunch-break one of my classmates stole my lunch-box. I asked the class whether they have seen the culprit. They all laughed at me. One of them asked me how could a blind know that he was searching from the right school bag for his lunch box without asking assistance from the sighted learners. I was firstly supposed to have asked them for my schoolbag and thereafter complain if my lunch-box was missing.

INT: Yes.

RES: They started to give me their lunch-boxes filled with torn papers and left-overs from their lunch boxes to eat. I did not think that they were serious about what they were doing, because we did sometimes play some pranks and laugh about them. But I eventually noticed that they were serious because they went outside and pick assortments of rubbish which they gave me to eat for lunch, hoping that I would not notice what I ate.

INT: How did you feel?

RES: I felt betrayed by the people I thought they knew and understood me. Yes, I felt different inside. Like I'm not ... I'm not a human being. I'm not ... I'm not the same as them.

INT: Yes

RES: I went outside because I could not bear the humiliation I suffered. All these were from people I thought I was part of because we used to play together and were in the same class for more than six months. From that day I knew that I had to think and be careful with whom I talked to and whom I befriended. The school became a total different place for me. It became a ghost town which haunted me

every morning I went there. Everybody started to behave differently towards me.

INT: How different?

RES: You don't really understand. Everybody turned their backs on me. It was as if I was suffering from a terrible infectious disease. Thereafter I had to look for a quiet place where I could sit alone and be accompanied by my dreams.

INT: Let me see if I got you right. By avoiding you, you felt robbed of your sense of belonging. Is that right?

RES: Yeah. But why can people be so cold and cruel to others?

INT: You tell me.

RES: I tried to wrestle with that question but I could not find a good answer for it. There is a poem which I learnt when I was in grade 4. The title of the poem is: All things bright and beautiful. Do you know it?

INT: No.

RES: I will just recite some few lines from it, and it goes this way:

All things bright and beautiful.  
All creatures great and small.  
The Lord God made them all ....

And I want to add my own line there and it will go this way:

All things bright and beautiful.  
All creatures great and small.  
All creatures impaired and normal.  
The Lord God made them all.

INT: You seem to like poetry?

RES: Yeah: I also like music particularly which has meaning to my present situation. Sometimes I wonder how the world would be if I was sighted. Thinking of my physical status depresses me.

INT: How do you experience that depression?

RES: It's like ... its like numbness, a not wanting to do anything.

INT: Yes.

RES: I feel like there are all these negative feelings inside me and yet I cannot really feel them.

INT: Hm.

RES: You know it just feels so numb.

INT: Could you describe the numbness?

RES: It feels like there is a void in me its empty .... no it's not, it's not ... It's full of feelings .... but they're dangerous. They need to be kept under control.

INT: What are those feelings?

RES: Do you remember the additional line I put to the poem?

INT: What about it?

RES: Let me simply explain it to you. We are all God's creatures irrespective of whether impaired or not and God loves us all. So it turn he wants us to love and respect each other.

INT: Hm

RES: So who are they to treat me like nobody .... like something from another planer. I felt lonely, hopeless, helpless, unwanted and confused. I really didn't know who am I. You know ..... you know ..... Eish! it is really tough out there.

INT: When you say its really tough out there what do you exactly mean?

RES: I mean ..... I mean .... this has change the way I used ..... I mean the way I used to see things and myself. I never, I say I never thought that people can change one's character in such a negative way. I am no longer in good terms with my friends at school and at home.

INT: Hm!

RES: I no longer hang around with them because they think I'm not their type. Nobody wants to talk to me. Oh, its unbearable and frustrating. Since attending this school I feel quite better. Here we don't ridicule each other. We do have our differences but at least they are not as bad as what we experience in the townships.

INT: To sum up what you have said I can say that being visually impaired make you feel that you are not regarded as a human being, not being respected and not being part of your friends.

RES: Yes. That's how things are.

INT: Thank you. I will see you in our next appointment, but if there is anything else you want to say, please feel free to do so.

RES: Thank you.