

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE FACTORS PROMOTING ACADEMIC RESILIENCE IN
SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED GRADE SIX LEARNERS**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own original work. I have not submitted it to any other university before. I also declare that I have acknowledged the source for information used from others.

Signature.....

Date

Supervisor's signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the people who have willingly helped children to develop physically, emotionally and psychologically so that they could become a nation which lives harmoniously in this world.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores factors promoting academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. It is a qualitative research located in the interpretive paradigm. Two theories namely The Resilience and Youth Development Module (RYDM) and The Asset-based Approach were used to frame the study. The objective of the study was to help schools to build academic resilience in learners especially those who are at risk of failure due to hardships they experience. A case study of a primary school in the rural area of the Quthing District in Lesotho was done. Four learners in grade six from socio-economically disadvantaged families were interviewed using semi-structured interviews combined with observations as data collection instruments. The learners were purposively selected with the assumption that they are knowledgeable about the phenomenon under investigation.

The main finding from the study is hope for the future. The participants regard education as the only way out of poverty so they want to change their lives together with their families through educational excellence. The findings also revealed that support from parents, school, peers and the community play a significant role in building academic resilience in these learners. In conclusion, this study suggests collaborative efforts among stakeholders because school is not an isolated institution. Therefore there is a need for parents, teachers, peers and the community in which schools are situated to work hand in hand for the benefit of learners and the building of a stable nation. The study shows that support provided to the learners from poverty stricken families encourages them to persevere with their schooling and think positively and hope to prosper in the future.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

FPE	Free Primary Education
WFP	World Food Programme
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
PSLE	Primary School Leaving Examinations
RYDM	Resilience and Youth Development Module
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The current global economic crisis, undoubtedly, has a devastating effect on the young generation. Sudden retrenchments of thousands of people mean the triple threat of poverty, unemployment and diseases will remain the biggest challenge the world is yet to conquer (Cobbe, 2012). What is even more worrying is that the younger generation's basic human right to be educated is compromised as families have less money to meet basic needs (Oliver, Wood & de Lange, 2009). Without a job, no mother or father is in a position to fulfil their parental role of ensuring the future of their children. Such future comes about as a result of receiving good education (Oliver, Wood & de Lange, 2009; Mbuli, 2008). It is in this context that poverty is, and has remained for years, a sore point that continues to cripple children's education as parents are prevented from accessing financial resources essential for general survival. Under these circumstances, food becomes the primary focus and education, unfortunately, becomes a luxury.

Lesotho, the research context for this study, like many other developing countries, is not immune from the plight discussed above. Basotho men in particular, especially those who used to work in the mines in South Africa, have experienced an unbelievable rate of retrenchments. Maleleka (2009, p.14) argues that "the fall in the number of migrant mineworkers translated into a fall in income for the majority of households in Lesotho." As parents are responsible for their children's education, loss of income means no other way of bringing money and children are suffering. Such suffering is particularly felt when it comes to education.

Poverty stricken parents, who somehow manage to send their children to school, place them at risk of academic failure (Chirwa, 2009; USAID, 2008; Barry, 2006; Mbele, 2005; Mthiyane, 2003) because they cannot afford to buy educational resources as well as survival needs. Some children, however, thrive educationally despite these prevailing economic adversities (Newell & Van Ryzin, 2007; Makhonza, 2006; Snyder, 2002; Clemente, 2001). Some scholars have labelled such learners as academically resilient (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Von Secker, 2004). It is these

learners that are the focus of this study. The purpose is to explore and understand factors that contribute to their academic resilience despite coming from poverty stricken families.

1.2 Background to the study

Lesotho, a small country surrounded by South Africa, depends on the latter for most of its economic needs. This is particularly true with the Basotho men who mostly work in the South African mining industry. Due to the global economic crisis, most of these men lose their jobs and are consequently forced to return to their country (Mbuli, 2008). The most worrying trend is that most of them go back home without any skills and knowledge and without any plans that could help them in finding alternative sources to earn a living. Dhemba (2012), for example, asserts that this is mainly the reason many Lesotho families live below the poverty line, that is, the scale assumed to be every person's expenditure on monthly bases to satisfy basic needs. Such a scale differs from country to country. Those who use a less amount of money than the one on the scale are considered poor for they are regarded as living below poverty line. Needless to say, this is a serious condition as it affects families, communities and the countries. The implication is that even schooling is affected by this.

This is crucial for, at an international level, education is considered to be one of the fundamental rights for all children (UN, 1989; UNESCO, 1990). Despite this worldwide agreement, before the year 2000, many children in Lesotho were not able to attend primary education, especially in the rural areas. This was due to the fact that their parents could not afford to pay school fees. The situation was so dire that, while some of the boys ended up getting employment as herd boys, younger girls contributed in their homes by looking after their younger siblings while the mothers worked in the fields in order to earn a living to buy food. Under these circumstances, only a few children, whose parents had money for school-fees, managed to attend school. This state of affairs required urgent government intervention.

Accordingly, and in line with the United Nation's resolution of 1989 to promote education for all, in the year 2000 Lesotho introduced free primary education (FPE). As would be expected, children who were out of school because of the high unemployment rate of parents returned to school in their numbers. This government's gesture indicated clearly a laudable commitment to educate the nation. In Maleleka's (2009, p.17) words, "access to education may be considered a

key indicator of the government's commitment to the provision of education." Not only did primary education become free, learners were, and still are, supplied with textbooks and stationery.

As would be expected in a developing country, however, there is still a need for further funding to buy educational resources such as uniforms and stationery. The latter is needed because the government supply is quarterly. There is thus still a lack of the educational resources necessary for effective learning in the classroom. Research also revealed that food remains another challenge. It is reported that learners come to school hungry and, as a consequence, struggle to concentrate during lessons (Kalenga, 2010; Chirwa, 2009). According to Gizir and Aydin (2009) some of these learners perform consistently better regardless of these unfavourable circumstances. This aspect is the motivation for this study, namely to explore and understand factors that promote academic resilience in the learners who achieve academically despite economic and educational hardships.

Even though several studies on the relationship between poverty and education have been conducted, (Chirwa, 2009), few have actually engaged with factors associated with their academic success. It is in this context that this study focuses on factors promoting academic resilience in such learners. Only Gizir and Aydin (2009) have conducted studies on learners' academic success that come from poverty stricken families. Thus, this study is aimed at filling that gap. If there are no further studies on the subject, then only the studies from a deficit model will exist, and none will endeavour to reveal that children from poverty stricken homes can still succeed academically. While this deficit model is important and has its place, the concern with it is that the status quo in terms of available knowledge will persist and the situation will remain unchanged. There is therefore a need to conduct this study. The hope is that the investigation and the findings will contribute to identifying strategies that can be used to improve academic resilience in learners coming from poverty stricken families, with the goal to improve their academic achievement.

1.3 The rationale for the study

Drawing from the researcher's experience of working as a primary school teacher, it becomes clear that poverty is affecting many families which, in turn, manifest itself in the classroom as learners' academic challenges surface. Some learners, for example, come from child-headed homes, with absent adult care and provision of basic needs. In cases where adults are present, unemployment becomes another stumbling block. Both circumstances lead to a situation where some learners come to school without a meal and limited educational resources.

Of the two problems, however, food shortage remains the biggest problem. In Beukes's (2012) study, it is reported that a 75 year old woman in Lesotho broke into tears when she was describing the conditions under which she is raising her grandchildren. She had nothing to feed them as their fathers were in South Africa. In August 2012, the Prime Minister of Lesotho declared an emergency food crisis and requested help from other countries, particularly South Africa (Beukes, 2012). Bennell (2005) states that sometimes the food received at school is the only meal these learners have for the day. Furthermore, some of them come to school without dressing properly and because of this, they are discriminated against by their peers. It is not surprising that for these learners it may be difficult to concentrate during lessons. However, there are learners who overcome this situation and succeed academically (Gizir & Aydin, 2009).

In Lesotho, there are organisations such as The Red Cross and The World Vision which help learners from poverty-stricken families with items such as maize-meal, school-shoes and uniforms. This helps but is not enough as these learners' basic needs are still not all met. For example, when given maize-meal after a long period of starving, they still need a balanced diet for a healthy lifestyle. A balanced diet also needs money, which is not available in their families. As a result, they are likely to suffer from deficiency diseases. Hence, the researcher wanted to explore and understand the reasons for resilience some learners from poverty stricken families show to their studies and succeed academically.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study hopes to find out factors that contribute to academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantage families. These factors could be used in schools to promote academic

success especially of learners who experience academic failure due to poverty. This will also reduce the drop out of learners from schools and prepare them for poverty reduction.

1.5 Purpose of the study

The study had two objectives

- To establish what problems are experienced by learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families.
- To identify the factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged learners.

1.6 Key research questions

To meet these objectives, the study sought to answer the following key research questions:

1. What are the problems experienced by learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families?
2. What are the factors promoting academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families?

1.7 Research methodology

This study is located within qualitative research with a case study of a single school. This was chosen for its ability to allow in-depth data collection (Babbie, 2013). It used individual interviews with semi-structured questions. Observation while conducting these interviews was also used. According to Silverman (2001), personal interviews can be combined with observation in qualitative research.

1.7.1 Sampling

The researcher used purposive sampling (Babble, 2013; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008) to select participants in the research context. The participants were chosen with the assumption that they are knowledgeable about the phenomenon studied (Denscombe, 2010), and could therefore provide rich data. The researcher used four learners who come from poverty stricken families, but having a good pass mark with an average mark of 50% (this mark is considered a good mark as it is a second class pass in primary schools in Lesotho) or above in the second term of 2012. The selected participants were two boys and two girls aged 12 to 14 years from grade six in one of the primary schools in a rural area in Lesotho.

1.8 How is the data analyzed

Interviews and observation were used to collect data. The researcher used coding to make meaning of the data collected. According to Neuwenhuis (2007) coding is the reading of the transcripts very careful line by line to identify phrases that have a meaning. These were put into categories and finally into themes.

1.9 Limitations of the study

This was a case study from a single school therefore the findings cannot be generalized. This is stated by Cohen, Marion and Morrison (2011) that the findings from a case study cannot be generalized. However the readers can make their own conclusion and transfer the findings to a similar situation they are aware of. Additionally, the use of a large case study from other schools and participants rather than learners only could add to the reliability and validity of the findings. Furthermore, the use of other methods such as narrative could be used for a better understanding of the phenomenon investigated.

1.10 How is the dissertation organized

Chapter One provides the background to the study. It outlines the rationale and the significance of the study. The intention was to explore and understand factors promoting academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. The chapter also gives the importance of the findings.

Chapter Two defines key concepts and outlines literature found to be related to the study. It discusses the findings of other researchers who conducted previous research related to the current study. According to Sosa (2011), Corcoran and Nichols-Casebolt (2004) and Rosenfeld, Richman and Bowen (2000), support from different sources helps learners to work hard in their studies. Support enables learners who experience problems to identify human resources to consult when they encounter different problems. These include parents, trusted adults and teachers.

Chapter Three discusses the theories used to frame the study. These two theories are The Resilience and Youth Development Module (RYDM) Theoretical Framework, together with The Asset-based approach.

Chapter Four is about the research methodology used in the study. The study aimed at collecting in-depth data on factors promoting academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. For that reason it is located in qualitative research using a case study of a single school in Lesotho. The methods used were individual interviews combined with observation.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the study. The findings are the answer to the key research question which was on the factors that contribute to academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. The findings could be used to motivate and reduce risk of failure as well as dropout from schools of learners at-risk due to poverty.

Chapter Six concludes the study and provides a summary, limitations of the study and recommendations for further investigations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the study. This chapter defines key terms used in the study namely: resilience, academic resilience, socio-economic disadvantage and disadvantaged learner. It reviews literature that concerns itself with socio-economically disadvantaged families and its impact on children. It also explores issues that relate to the research problem regarding factors promoting academic resilience in learners from low socio-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds. Different kinds of literature from a variety of sources such as journals, books, theses, dissertations and the Internet were reviewed. Following is the definition of key concepts.

2.2 Definition of key concepts

Grix and Watkins (2010, p.16) assert that “concepts are the building blocks of any description, explanation or argument, hypotheses and theories are made of them...A concept carries with it

certain built-in assumptions about the world, or certain ways to understand empirical phenomena.” It is therefore essential to explain the terms used in a study so that the reader may understand how the terms are used as they may have different meanings in different contexts. The concepts used in the study are as follows:

2.2.1 Resilience

According to Ungar (2012, p.13), the phenomenon “began to appear with frequency in the psychological sciences in the 1980s and was a metaphor for the ability of individuals to recover from exposure to chronic and acute stress.” While resilience is taken to be an umbrella concept due to its many definitions, Walsh (2012, p.173) defines resilience as “the ability to withstand and rebound from stressful life challenges, strengthened and more resourceful.” Lee, Cheung and Kwong (2012, p.3) describe resilience as “the process of effectively mobilizing internal and external resources in adapting to or managing significant sources of stress or trauma.” Clemente (2001, p.8) refers to resilience as “a set of attributes that provides people with strengths and determination to overcome adversity and develop social, academic and vocational competence.” Theron (2006, p.92) defines resilience to be “positive functioning in negative circumstances.” Style (2011, p.129) indicates that people who are claimed to be resilient are:

- optimistic;
- hopeful and able to solve problems;
- believe in themselves but are not brimming with self-confidence;
- can self-regulate and use their emotions appropriately;
- are able to find benefit and meaning in adversity;
- use humour;
- have experience of a strong nurturing authority figure from childhood;
- use social support and are able to draw on friendships and family;

- have a good toolbox of adaptive defences; and
- are able to learn, forgive and move on.

People who have these characteristics, according to Style (2011), are likely to succeed in life because they have life-skills which can be applied on daily basis. For example, problem-solving skills which they have acquired could be used to solve their everyday problems, while their optimistic point of view keeps them motivated for prosperity in the future. Moreover, Style (2011) claims resilient people have self-esteem which energises them to try new things and succeed as they believe in themselves to be capable.

As shown above, there are different definitions of resilience. It is thus not easy to tell the exact meaning because its meaning is found from the context in which it is used (Gizir & Aydin, 2009). Gizir and Aydin (2009) further state that the phenomenon is used differently by different cultures. However, all definitions of resilience appear to have one thing in common: it helps people adapt to their adversity by successfully applying problem-solving skills against their adversity and also helps in the development of their well-being (Cefai, 2004). For instance, in a situation where a person undergoes a stressful situation, instead of succumbing to sufferings, the person displays a positive attitude in the presence of such situation. For example, learners from low socio-economic backgrounds succeed academically in the presence of their adversity. At school, these learners are likely to have no educational resources like exercise books, pens and uniform. The expectation is that their studies will be negatively affected because of these shortcomings, but ironically, they motivate and encourage them (Pillay, 2011). It is thus common for such students that, despite continuing under such conditions, they succeed academically. That is why those who succeed in the face of such hardships are said to be resilient (Gizir & Aydin, 2009).

It is evident from the literature (Ungar, 2012) that people who are said to be resilient are those who experience hardships in their lives. However, instead of focusing on their difficulties, these people search for effective ways of dealing with their circumstances and positive ways of solving their problems (Ungar, 2012). Thus, resilience in this study considers the learners who achieve academically despite their sufferings caused by coming from socio-economically disadvantaged families. Other studies on resilience (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Makhonza, 2006) also used academic

achievement as an instrument to measure resilience because the literature shows that it is not easy to measure resilience on its own.

Research, furthermore, reveals that due to poverty, most learners do not perform well academically (Theron, 2006; Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Some of the learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families are not able to overcome the difficulties of going to school with bare-foot and having no uniform. Poverty is also the reason for the high drop-out rate in search of jobs for survival. It is revealed by Lekhetho (2013) that children who come from poverty stricken families leave school before they complete their primary schooling, especially boys in the rural areas where they become herdboys to earn money. So learners who overcome such challenges of going to school bare-footed, hungry and without a proper uniform, and still perform well in their studies are said to be resilient (Ungar, 2012; Theron, 2006). However, this does not mean that learners who do not show academic resilience are not resilient at all. They may be resilient in other contexts (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). According to Dass-Brailsford (2005), the way resilience is used differs according to culture, so what is considered to be resilience in one cultural context may not be taken as such in another.

2.2.2 Academic resilience

In this study, academic resilience is defined as perseverance and good performance at school by learners who are at-risk of failure due to the socio-economic adversities they encounter in their families (Gizir & Aydin, 2009). Their problems are mainly lack of basic needs, food in particular. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory claims that the development and well-being of a person depends on the fulfilment of basic needs such as food, water and shelter (Maslow, 1974). However, the needs of learners from poverty-stricken families are not adequately met because they lack basic needs for survival as well as educational resources for effective learning. It is for this reason that those who succeed in spite of their hardships are taken to be academically resilient. According to Gross (2011), academic resilience is educational success in the presence of adversities. Research indicates that in order for effective learning to take place, there should be conditions that are conducive to learning (Chirwa, 2009). These include the presence of basic needs such as food for survival and educational resources like uniform, text-books and stationery

for effective learning. Academic resilience and academic achievement are used interchangeable in this study.

2.2.3 Socio-economic status

Socio-economic status is the standard of living concerning resources one possesses. This depends on monetary basis as advantaged families could afford resources like houses, education and health services while disadvantaged families could not afford to provide the family with the resources it needs as well as education and health services due to financial problems (Oliver, Wood & de Lange, 2009). The main reason for this situation in disadvantaged families is unemployed or earn small salaries as a salary is determined by the level of education one obtains. If the members of the family are educated, they are likely to live a better life with sufficient resources. For example, the family will be able to send children to school and provide money for other services like health. On the other hand, the family with no or little education won't be able to provide its members with resources such as housing, clothing and education. However, the learners with academic resilience overcome the conditions caused by poverty (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Von Secker, 2004). In this study the following terms are used interchangeable: low socio-economic, poverty stricken and socio-economically disadvantaged.

2.2.3.1 Effects of socio-economic disadvantage on children

According to Schoon, Sacker and Bartley (2003), children from socio-economically disadvantaged families are affected physically and psychologically. They are robbed physically as they have no food for a good healthy life style, no clothes to wear and their standard of living may be affected because their parents do not have money for proper housing as they may live in over-crowded houses which are not well ventilated. For this reason, children from socio-economically disadvantaged families are likely to experience health problems (Thompson, Wells

& Coats, 2012). Their state of health may also be caused by malnutrition so it is possible for such children to be absent from school frequently because of illness. Therefore children's fundamental right which is among others, a right to education is hindered by poverty.

Furthermore, Sacker, Schoon and Bartley (2002) indicate that poverty stricken children's education is likely to be compromised because they tend to drop out of school and enter workplace at an early age and without adequate skills. Therefore it is likely that the state of poverty continues from one generation to another in such families.

Schoon, Sacker and Bartley (2003) add that children from poverty stricken families often get involved in risky behaviour. This may include drug abuse, crime and teenage pregnancy. They may continue with risky behaviour until adulthood and as a result, become parents who are psychologically affected and therefore become problematic parents in their families and in the community at large (Considine & Zappala, 2002).

Moreover, children from socio-economically disadvantaged families are likely not to get support they need for their schooling as their parents may not show interest in school like attending parents' meeting for example and providing time to study even at home. Additionally, they may be reluctant to participate and say their point of view in school activities. Therefore children are likely to experience failure due to lack of parents support, unlike their counterparts from privileged families whose parents are supportive and participate in schools activities (Considine & Zappala, 2002).

2.2.4 Disadvantaged learner

A disadvantaged learner is considered to be a school going child whose learning is hindered by difficult situations preventing effective learning. In this study disadvantaged learners are considered to be learners who are poverty stricken. For instance, they may lack water, food,

clothes, shelter and love, as well as school items such as school uniform and stationery due to poverty (Norman, 2008).

Research shows that, for learners to participate effectively in their studies, their basic needs should be fulfilled (Dass-Brailsford, 2005; USAID, 2008). If not, they may experience emotional stress, malnutrition, violence, abuse, discrimination and stigmatization at school and in the community due to the situation in which they find themselves (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Eamon, 2001). However, research reveals that there are learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families whose academic performance is outstanding and they prosper in their lives as a whole (Gizir & Aydin, 2009) despite their adversity. The following section discusses the reviewed literature.

2.3 Literature review

When conducting a study, literature review is of great value to the researcher. It provides the study with relevant, up-to-date detail, as well as the achievements and deficiencies on methodologies which were used by other scholars previously (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Furthermore, a literature review could provide the researcher with theories about the problem under investigation (Denby, Butroyd, Swift, Price & Glazzard, 2008). This guarantees that none of the previous studies are repeated and existing gaps in the subject get filled (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Murray & Beglar, 2009; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Mouton, 2006; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). New research techniques, furthermore, come to the fore and strengthen the current study and research findings often support new findings as a result of the use of such techniques (Creswell, 2012). In the context of this study, it is literature that will provide an account of problems experienced by learners from poverty stricken families, and factors that are found to promote their academic resilience.

Several studies (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Makhonza, 2006) revealed that there are factors that contribute to academic resilience among learners who experience hardships due to socio-economic difficulties in their families. Some studies for example, engage with factors that contribute to high school learners' failure in Lesotho (Jackson, 2009). For this reason, very little

research has been done on the subject in Lesotho. As a result, this study hopes to fill that gap. The next section engages with studies that focus on the problems experienced by learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families and factors that are found to promote their academic resilience.

2.4 Factors that contribute to academic failure

Poverty remains one of the main problems that learners from low socio-economic status experience and it plays a significant role in hindering them from effective learning and well-being (Lacour & Tissington, 2011). Findings from research revealed poverty to be the main problem experienced by learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families (Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen & Fritz, 2011; Chirwa, 2009; Norman, 2008; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Mbele, 2005; Von Secker, 2004). Chirwa (2009, p.3), for example, reveals that “poor children face a host of problems, from persistent hunger, lack of access to education and inadequate housing, to lack of access to health care, malnutrition and other forms of illnesses.” This means that learners from poverty stricken families are at risk of frequent illness because food is the fundamental basic need for human survival, as outlined by Chirwa (2009). According to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Poston, 2009; Ramdan, 2009; Maslow, 1974), there are basic needs that should be met for the development and well-being of human beings. These include food, water, clothes, shelter, clean air, love and protection. Therefore, if these basic needs are not met, they make children’s lives difficult and hinder their development. This is particularly acute to those learners who attend primary schools because they are still growing and therefore need more nurturing.

Research studies (Pillay, 2011; Chirwa, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Makhonza, 2006; Sharma, 2006; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Mthiyane, 2003; Becker & Luthar, 2002; Eamon 2001) show that if children’s basic needs are not fulfilled, they affect learners negatively in their studies. However there are some learners whose performance is outstanding despite their sufferings due to poverty (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Becker & Luthar, 2002). For instance, these learners are likely to go to school without eating their breakfast. They may also have a shortage concerning items such as pens, exercise books and textbooks (Lacour & Tissington, 2011) which are used in the classroom

for effective learning. Chirwa (2009) further maintains that poverty deprives learners from accessing resources that are necessary for their wellbeing. These include access to health care and nutrition, educational resources and other resources essential for their living (Chirwa, 2009). Kalenga (2010, p.80) further asserts that “learners that are born in poverty are denied the resources and opportunities available to other learners.” These may include educational resources as well as basic needs such as nutritional food for a healthy lifestyle.

Barry’s (2006) study reveals that learners from poverty stricken families experience emotional stress due to chronic conflicts that occur in their families. This is similar to the findings from Khanare (2008) which reveal that emotional stress is a problem in children from poverty stricken families. This is underpinned by a lack of resources and, as Barry (2006) points out, in these families parents may quarrel because of the challenges accompanying lack of necessary resources. Finances remain number one among such resources. Without this fundamental resource, parents are denied an opportunity to nurture and care for their children, a state of affairs that causes depression to all involved in the home (Barry, 2006).

Under such conditions, learners find it difficult to continue with their studies. As a result, frequent absenteeism and a high drop-out rate are common among such learners (Goba, 2008). Surprisingly, as research shows, some of these learners overcome such challenges and succeed in their studies as they manage to concentrate and, in fact succeed academically, in spite of their family economic adversities (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Those who show perseverance in their studies and succeed are said to be resilient (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Becker & Luthar, 2002). This is the reason this study attempts to explore the factors that contribute to their academic resilience.

Moreover, research reveals that learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families experience stigmatisation and discrimination (Khanare, 2008) from their peers coming from high socio-economic families. This has to be expected, particularly as they are likely to go to school without proper clothing. Research by Pillay (2011) reveals that sometimes they go with a dirty uniform. Dass-Brailsford (2005) also points out that poverty leads these learners to go to school barefooted and hungry. If they manage to get some food, it is full of carbohydrates (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). As a result, they are likely to suffer from malnutrition. All sorts of these problems expose them to other learners from advantageous families and become their victims.

Pillay (2011) reveals that the advantaged learners ill-treat learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. They tease and mock at them according to their physical appearance.

Motena (2009) reveals that, besides being discriminated against, learners from poverty stricken families are isolated from their peers, especially those who are living in child-headed families, and end up with limited time to interact and play with their peers. They rush home from school in order to perform chores that could be performed by adults if they were available at home (Chirwa, 2002). Pillay (2011, p.7) confirms this and points out that learners who are living alone “are forced to take on adult responsibilities even when they are still children in need of adult care and supervision.” This also reduces their time to study at home as they do not have adults to assist with their homework. Researcher will now turn to factors that promote academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families.

2.5. Factors promoting academic resilience

Several studies have been conducted on factors that promote academic achievement, even though they were not conducted in Lesotho (Wood, 2012; Gross, 2011, Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Solberg, Carlstrom, Howard & Jones, 2007; Barry, 2006; Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Findings from these studies revealed that there are factors that are found to promote academic resilience in learners who are at risk of academic failure, particularly those coming from socio-economically disadvantaged families. These factors are categorised into external and internal factors.

2.5.1 External factors

External factors are considered to be positive influences which are found in the learners’ environment namely: family, school, peers and the community (Makhonza, 2006).

2.5.1.1 Family

According to Mthiyane (2003) a family is the cornerstone of children's development. After all, this is the first place where primary teaching and learning takes place (Alvy, 2008). Mokomane (2011) agrees that the family is the first learning institution for children. This is also where children are taught how to behave and it is no wonder the family has a great influence on children. Such influence can either be positive or negative. Mthiyane (2003) adds that it is in the family where children build their self-confidence. Self-confidence could be encouraged by parents when showing acceptance and appreciation. Wicomb (2008, p.2) argues that the family "is responsible for child-rearing functions, which include providing physical necessities, emotional support, learning opportunities, moral guidance, economic, spiritual and cultural security, as well as building self-esteem and resilience." However, Mokomane (2011) claims that parents from poverty stricken families do not give their children the attention and the parental care they require.

The study conducted by Wood (2012) on factors that promote academic achievement in middle-school students in Southern California revealed the family to be the strongest promoter of academic resilience. Wood (2012) further asserts that the positive attitude of the family to learners plays a significant role, even if the family is experiencing some difficulties like low socio-economic problems. This finding is similar to the one reported in Makhonza (2006) on factors which contribute to orphaned learners' academic achievement.

Moreover, research also outlines time spent by the family with learners to be essential in building academic resilience (Wood, 2012). This includes time taken with learners when doing their homework as well as in fun activities (Barry, 2006). Makhonza (2006) indicates that children feel secured and belonging to the family. It is in this context that this study also addresses the importance of the family in providing learners with love and acceptance, with high but reliable expectations. The family is considered to play a major role in building academic achievement by supporting and encouraging children to continue with their studies and this is supported by the findings from researchers like Gizir and Aydin (2009) and Clemente (2001). In their study, Gizir and Aydin (2009) investigated factors contributing to academic resilience of students in Turkey who live in poverty. They revealed that high expectations from the family members were found to be the most significant external promoter of academic resilience. Clemente's (2001) study was conducted in grades nine and twelve in New York. The purpose was to investigate protective

factors and the development of resilience. The study identifies family support as the cornerstone contributor to academic achievement. Besides the family being involved with learners' homework, Clemente (2001) shows that learners whose families assure love and acceptance are not involved in at-risk behaviour such as antisocial behaviour, drop out from school, drug abuse and early pregnancy.

The family appears to play a major role in promoting academic resilience in learners. It is thus necessary for each family to realise how important the family is for the benefit of their children. For this reason, it is vital for parents to support their children in order to help them to be sustained in the difficult situations they face. Conclusions reached in various studies are that families are the foundation in building children's academic resilience (Makhonza, 2006). This is regardless of the situation in which parents find themselves. In all cases they are found to be the strongest promoters of academic achievement (Ginsburg, 2011; Alvy, 2008). It is in the family where children could develop and learn life-skills such as problem-solving, creativity, empathy, decision-making and competence, the two most common expectations by schools.

2.5.1.2 School

A school is a place where learners spend most of their time and, as a result, it has the possibility of influencing learners lives either positively or negatively. The school that has a positive environment encourages learners to work hard (Oliver, Wood & de Lange, 2009; Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Jackson, 2009; Ramdan, 2009; Becker & Luthar, 2002). Moloji, Dzvimbo, Potgieter, Wolhuter and Van der Walt (2010) agree that schools that are supportive with positive relationships and high, but reliable expectations to be the cornerstone of learners' academic achievement. Research reveals that in schools where learners are respected and are encouraged to talk, they feel free to negotiate their problems. This is the reason solutions are found easily when such problems arise (Pillay, 2011; Moloji *et al.*, 2010; Leatham, 2005). This is in line with Patterson and Kirkland (2007, p.7) who point out that to “invite children to talk about their experiences and say what they believe makes them bounce back when bad things happen.” Moloji *et al.* (2010) further report that in such a school teachers go the extra mile to help learners with

effective learning. For example, they help them with homework, especially those living without parents at home.

Ogina's (2007) study reveals that teachers provide learners with guidance and counselling where there is a good teacher-learner relationship. In this context, learners are encouraged to disclose their needs because their relationship is built on trust and learners feel free to disclose their problems. They believe that their disclosure is confidential as their relationship is based on trust, empathy, and confidentiality (Moloi *et al.*, 2010; Ogina, 2007). In schools where there is a good relationship between teachers and learners, learners are encouraged to concentrate on their studies for their future (Moloi *et al.*, 2010; Oliver, Wood & de Lange, 2009; Worley, 2007). Teachers also show pastoral care by providing guidance and counselling, including survival needs like food and uniform in particular (Pillay, 2011). In the school where learners are well cared for, they perceive the school as a safe place where they can be, in order to be away from the problems they experience at home and have hope about their lives (Ogina, 2007). In addition, Solberg *et al.* (2007) show that learners who are having good connections with their teachers are less likely to be involved in antisocial behaviour such as substance abuse or being abusive. However, the study conducted by Pillay (2011) claims that some of the teachers in school are not taking much initiative to help disadvantaged learners.

2.5.1.3 Peers

Corcoran and Nichols-Casebolt (2004) reveal that learners benefit from their peers in different ways. For instance, from a good relationship with their peers, the learners could get help in their studies, as well as in their daily lives when needed. This is in line with the findings by Moloi *et al.* (2010) and Williams and Butler (2010) that peers play an important role in building academic resilience in learners who are experiencing difficulties. Although peer relationships are considered to be a contributor to academic achievement, Becker and Luthar (2002) contend that it depends on what kind of peers learners have. If their peers are not interested in education, they are likely to involve themselves in negative activities. From Becker and Luthar's (2002) findings, peers may either have a positive or negative influence towards education. Therefore, learners are encouraged to be considerably careful when choosing friends.

2.5.1.4 Community

The study conducted by Makhonza (2006) reveals that community contributes in building academic resilience in learners at-risk of academic failure due to poverty. The study shows that the community provides these learners with food and clothes. This is also supported by Clemente's (2001) study which revealed that learners living in poverty get support from the community as they use adults whom they consider as their role models. People such as priests and other adults, who care, help these children in their daily lives and are there to share children's happiness as well as their sorrows. It is shown in the study conducted by Pillay (2011) that the community which takes care of the youth by providing them with essential resources where needed helps them feel happy and loved. However, Pillay (2011, p.13) also found that even though the community provides support to the learners who experience poverty, some people from the community abuse them as a result they are at risk of "physical assaults, rape, murder and robbery." The study shows that some learners prefer to be at school rather than being at home, especially those who are living in child-headed households. They claim that the school is a safer place than their community (Pillay, 2011).

2.5.2 Internal factors

These are the factors that are found within learners themselves and considered to play a major role in promoting academic resilience in learners who encounter hardships caused by low socio-economic status experienced in their families.

2.5.2.1 Individual characteristics

In contrast with family as the cornerstone predictor of academic resilience, Dass-Brailsford (2005) in her study on academic achievement among disadvantaged black youth in South Africa claims individual characteristics to be the most important predictor of academic achievement. Dass-Brailsford (2005) conducted the research for the purpose of exploring how a group of black

youth achieve academically in spite of socio-economic difficulties. The study maintains that learners who achieve academically from poverty stricken families have the following characteristics: are high achieving and goal oriented, strong initiative and motivation, self-confidence and self-determination (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). This shows that instead of looking at the situation they find themselves in, these learners focus on the goals they want to achieve in their lives (Ginsburg, 2011; Snyder, 2000). Research outlines that such learners perceive education to be the way out of poverty as their focus is to change their lives together with their siblings in the future (Gross, 2011; Pillay, 2011; Oliver, Wood & de Lange, 2009).

Moreover, their intrinsic motivation acts as their energiser to overcome their hardships. As a result, they succeed academically (Style, 2011). Motivation is a very useful tool to success as pointed out by Style (2011). Gizir and Aydin (2009) further indicate that learners who value themselves as important people, have high educational aspirations, empathetic and have hope for their future. Snyder (2002, p.249) maintains that “higher hope consistently is related to better outcomes in academics, athletics, physical health, psychological adjustment and psychotherapy.” Instead of high expectations from the family, Gross (2011) in his study contends that learners who have high expectations about their siblings are resilient to their own academic achievement.

In addition, in their study on academic resilience on Australian high school students, Martin and Marsh (2006) reveal self-efficacy, planning, low anxiety and persistence to be the factors promoting academic resilience in learners. Self-efficacy is considered to be the capability which learners perceive themselves to have. At this point, learners are not afraid of challenges as they have a belief in them to do well. This helps them keep on trying even new tasks. Furthermore, they make plans to meet their goals and try by all means not to give up and avoid negative thoughts by keeping themselves focused on their goals (Style, 2011). As a result they become academically resilient.

Snyder, Shorey, Cheavens, Pulvers, Adams III and Wikland (2002) reveal that students who have high hope and are intrinsically motivated are able to succeed and finish their studies. They have a locus of control, high self-esteem, self-awareness, self-determination and believe that they are capable to do well in their studies (Borman & Rachuba, 2001). This is also revealed in the studies by Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen and Fritz (2011) and Pillay (2011) that education in learners who experience socio-economic difficulties is the only hope they have that

could change their situation in the future. They also realise that their academic success is underpinned by working hard because hope without doing anything will not do them any good (Mokgatle- Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen & Fritz, 2011). They set goals for themselves and stay focused to reach them (Snyder, *et al.*, 2002). Newell and Van Ryzin (2007, p.468) indicate that “hope can benefit students during their time in school as well as in other parts of their lives... they also tend to perceive that they will be more successful at attaining their goals even if they do not experience immediate success.” Hope acts as a motivation that provides these learners with energy to continue even under the difficult circumstances (Theron, 2006). This is in line with the findings by Lothe and Heggen (2003) that hope is a significant element to positive life.

The reviewed literature shows that in order for children to build academic resilience, there should be support from different sources. Several studies revealed the family to be the major factor that has the strongest influence on children. The family is considered to be the main promoter of children’s academic resilience because it is the place where children start learning from. For instance, self-confidence could be built in children by the family members if they show among other things, appreciation, recognition, tolerance and acceptance in children. On the other hand, the family could destroy children’s self-esteem if they always receive negative feedback. This has the possibility of lowering children’s confidence.

2.6 Conclusion

The chapter defined key terms used in the study. It showed problems experienced by learners from poverty stricken families and factors that considered building their academic resilience. These include a caring environment from learners’ social surrounding such as parents, adults in the community, as well as teachers who are supportive and peers who show acceptance. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter defined concepts used in the study and discussed the reviewed literature concerning problems encountered by learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families and factors considered to promote their academic resilience. This chapter discusses the theories used to frame the study. These are The Resilience and Youth Development Module (RYDM) Theoretical Framework and the Asset-based approach.

3.2 Theoretical framework

“A theory predicts and explains natural phenomena. Instead of explaining each and every separate behavior...the scientist seeks general explanations that link together different behaviors” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p.8). Babbie (2007, p.43) defines theories as “systematic sets of interrelated statements intended to explain some aspect of social life. Thus, theories flesh out and specify paradigms.” From these definitions we understand that a theory helps to shape a study as well as help the researcher to make meaning of the raw data collected. The researcher intends to use two theories for the research. These are The Resilience and Youth Development Module (RYDM) Theoretical Framework together with the Asset-based approach.

3.2.1 The Resilience and Youth Development Module Theoretical Framework

The Resilience and Youth Development Module (RYDM) was developed by WestEd, a nonprofit research, development and service agency in California (Berman, 2007). It was developed for the purpose of assessing external and internal assets in youth for their development (WestEd, 2003). The assumption of this theory is that all people are capable of overcoming their adversities and succeed as long as they could get the support they need (WestEd, 2003). The theory is aimed at youth developmental support and provides opportunities to enhance success. **Figure 3.1** below represents this theoretical design and explains both external and internal assets of the theory.

The RYDM Theoretical Framework

The Youth Development Process: Resiliency in action



External Assets

Youth Needs

Internal Assets

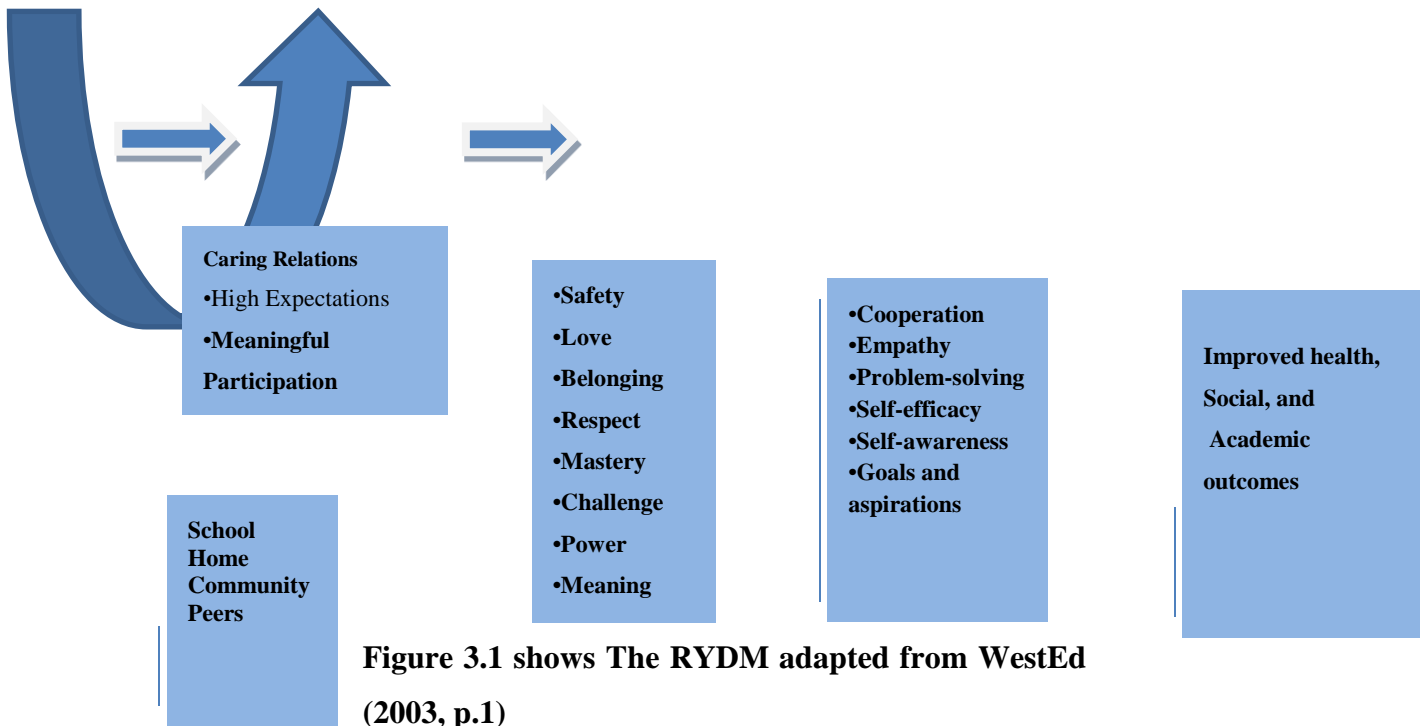


Figure 3.1 shows The RYDM adapted from WestEd (2003, p.1)

3.2.2 External assets

According to Berman (2007), external assets (factors) consist of caring relationships, high expectations and meaningful participation in the learners' environment, namely the home, school, peers and the community. Below is the explanation of external assets.

3.2.2.1 Family factors

The theory is based on the assumption that the family members play a major role in their children's academic success (Ginburg, 2011; Berman, 2007). The theory also has the assumption that the family members' high expectations encourage children to work hard in order to achieve academically. This assists them in fulfilling the family's expectations, especially when they are reliable. The family members could also participate in school activities, such as helping with homework and attending parents' meetings.

3.2.2.2 School factors

The RYDM notion is that teachers who respect their learners and support them when they are in need of any help and having high expectations contribute to learners' academic resilience (WestEd, 2003). The assumption is that teachers who have high expectations inspire learners to work hard academically. In the school where there is a good teacher-learner relationship, learners are free to talk about their problems. As a result, solutions are found because teachers are ready to help, guide and council with love (Moloi *et al.*, 2010). Moloi *et al.* (2010) also indicate that in a school where teachers are supportive, learners are respected and allowed to voice their own views. This is similar to the findings from Gross (2011) that teachers work together for learners' development and have high expectations from them towards their learners' performance. All of this encourages learners to do well in their studies, regardless of their situations (Gross, 2011).

3.2.2.3 Peer group factors

The RYDM shows that learners' appreciation and high expectations from their peers work as a motivation (WestEd, 2003). It is for this reason that it contributes positively towards learners' academic achievement. This theory, furthermore, shows that learners' acceptance from their peers makes them feel that they are belonging. This makes them feel valued and it makes them work harder at fulfilling those expectations.

3.2.2.4 Community factors

The fourth factor that is considered to be contributing to learners' academic resilience is the community which learners come from (Makhonza, 2006). The theory shows that if the members of the community show interest and have high expectations of learners, they work hard in order to fulfill those expectations (WestEd, 2003). The theory shows that the community takes part by giving assistance when needed. This may be words of encouragement and any other kind of assistance. Moreover, Berman (2007) states that the learners use adults in the community rather than their own parents whom they regard as their role models. These adults contribute to learners' academic resilience in the sense that they give them the support they are in need of. The following are the internal factors from the theory assumed to promote academic resilience.

3.2.3 Internal assets

Internal assets are considered to be the individual qualities and characteristics developed by a caring relationship, high expectations and a meaningful participation from home, school, friends and the community (WestEd, 2003). These factors are cooperation and communication, self-efficacy, empathy, problem-solving, self-awareness, goals and aspirations.

3.2.3.1 Cooperation and communication

According to The RYDM, learners who are able to work with other people and appreciate their uniqueness are found to be successful in their studies (WestEd, 2003). They understand that people have different opinions and as a result they acknowledge other people's views.

3.2.3.2 Self-efficacy

The theory states that learners who succeed academically are able to solve their own problems (WestEd, 2003). The theory indicates that learners believe in themselves and know their strengths, as well as their weaknesses, and are willing to improve the latter. They think positively about themselves (Gross, 2011), and this is the reason they are motivated therefore succeed.

3.2.3.3 Empathy

According to the RYDM, empathy contributes to learners' academic achievement (WestEd, 2003). The assumption is that people who have an understanding of others' thoughts and feelings and care for them are likely to succeed. The theory also shows that youth who show empathy are generally having a good relationship with others, so this reduces mischievous behaviour such as teasing and bullying (WestEd, 2003).

3.2.3.4 Problem-solving

The RYDM has an assumption that learners who have problem-solving skills are able to perform well in their studies because they ask for help if needed (WestEd, 2003). Moloji *et al.* (2010) support this theory and point out that learners who have problem-solving skills are not reluctant to talk about their problems and search for positive solutions. They know who to turn to when

they have problems (Snyder *et al.*, 2002). For example, they consult adults when they encounter difficulties while sometimes they may use their teachers or trusted peers.

3.2.3.5 Self-awareness

The RYDM has the assumption that the foundation of human success and development is the knowledge and understanding of one's self (WestEd, 2003). This means that learners have to identify their strong and weak points for improvement. This includes an understanding of one's thoughts and feelings as they play an important role on one's behaviour. For instance, if the learners' thoughts and feelings are positive, they are likely to influence their expectations in a positive way as well.

3.2.3.6 Goals and aspirations

Goals and aspirations are dreams and visions to be fulfilled. The RYDM has the assumption that learners that have dreams about their future work hard to fulfill their vision and this protects them against negative outcomes such as school failure, drug abuse and teen pregnancy (WestEd, 2003). As they plan to prosper in the future, they are likely to succeed because of intrinsic motivation they have. They try by all means to succeed in their studies so that they could reach their goal as they hope to live according to their dreams. This is confirmed by Snyder (2000) that human beings are goal-oriented and have high expectations about their future. In line with Barry (2006), learners with high expectations generally score higher marks at school.

The RYDM was adapted from the study conducted in Turkey on factors that contribute to learners' academic resilience by Gizir and Aydin (2009) and found to be reliable. The theory has information on strengths, competences and positive social health in youth as well as their risk and problem behaviour (Berman, 2007). It gives information about the support and opportunities for young people and how they relate to other people in home, school, peer group and the community. Therefore it is essential and relevant to this study as it will enable the researcher to give meaning to the data collected on factors promoting academic resilience in disadvantaged learners in grade six in one primary school in Lesotho.

3.3 Asset-based approach

This theory bases itself on strengths possessed by human beings rather than focusing on their weaknesses. Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006, p.462) define asset-based approach as follows:

The asset-based approach is therefore "internally focused". It means that the development strategy concentrates first of all on the agenda building and the problem solving capacities of the residents, local associations and institutions (e.g. learners, families, schools, NGOs). This internal focus is to stress the primacy of local definition, empowerment, creativity and hope-linking it with embedded knowledge systems. The asset-based approach can also be described as a "bottom-up approach" that shifts the emphasis from a service perspective to an empowerment perspective. By definition the asset-based approach is relationship driven. Relationships need to be built and rebuilt between individuals, local associations and institutions through the process of facilitation, based on the strengths and talents of the individuals involved.

According to Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) the asset-based approach believes in working together and using the available resources for the benefit of the whole organisation. This approach encourages working collaboratively and using available resources in the way that they do not benefit only individuals but the whole society. It emphasises the strengths rather than deficit in the group. Therefore it could be effectively used for encouraging disadvantaged learners to continue with their schooling as they would be supported, helped and encouraged in their studies. For instance, the learners may ask other adults rather than their parents in helping them to solve their problems. They may be able to contact people in the community to help. For example, sometimes learners may need just a word of encouragement, appreciation or an appraisal where appropriate.

Furthermore, the asset-based approach focuses on people's strengths rather than their weaknesses and believes that every person has something good and is capable of solving problems (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). This correlates with the RYDM theory that human beings are capable of doing well as long as they get the support they need. Therefore the asset-based approach can help the school, parents, teachers, learners and the community at large to work collaboratively for the benefit of learners especially those who are at risk like socio-economically disadvantaged learners. The learners will be encouraged to use the available resources effectively. Resources may include people around them such as parents, teachers, peers and supportive adults in the community for academic work as well as their daily personal problems. This approach believes that every human being has abilities which can benefit the whole system if used effectively since

it does not concentrate on problems but on strengths for improvement (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). However the asset-based approach does not ignore scarcity of resources but encourages people to work collaboratively and use available resources effectively.

The asset-based approach is found to be essential and related to the study as the literature reviewed shows the strengths of disadvantaged learners who succeed regardless of their adversities through assistance from other people. The asset-based approach could identify problems experienced by socio-economically disadvantaged learners and find the means to solve them. For example, for those who lack food, it would prompt the community and the school to approach relevant organizations such as Social Welfare, The Red Cross and The World Vision (in Lesotho) as they take care of children's welfare. For those who need emotional support, the school may organise for counselling or teachers themselves may try to assist even though they are not professional counsellors.

According to this approach, working collaboratively is a source of problem solving (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) indicate that the cornerstone of an asset-based approach is to work with others for the purpose of improvement in the society. This means that learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families could feel important and belonging due to the support they would get from different people in the community.

Moreover, help and support could also be found from different organisations if the asset-based approach is applied. Stakeholders may realise the important role which each part could play in supporting one another as the school is part of the whole community for its effectiveness. All this is likely to build academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged learners. It may improve learners' participation in the classroom. This may also encourage improvement as support is taken to be of a great importance for their well-being (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004). The learners may also realise their importance and identify things they are good at and how to use available human resources for their studies including personal problems they may experience in their daily lives. All these may contribute to the way the learners will concentrate in the classroom and an improvement in academic performance could be experienced.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter explained the theories used in the study, namely: The RYDM and the asset-based approach which are used as a framework in the study. It shows how these two theories are

relevant to the study, as well as their importance. The RYDM shows the important role learners' environment could play in their academic achievement, including their well-being. This environment consists of family, with members who are supportive. In this context, a school which cares and supports learners for effective teaching and learning adds to the equation. It also highlights the significance of peers with appreciation and acceptance together with the caring community.

The asset-based approach demonstrates the significance of collaboration of each stakeholder for the benefit of learners at-risk. These include the department of education at the district level, the school governing body, principal, teachers, non-educational staff, parents, community and learners working together with other organisations. Again, if learners at-risk of academic failure, due to poverty, could effectively use human resources around them, they might find solutions for some of their problems. This will not benefit learners only, but the community as a whole because there is less crime in a wealthy community where the majority of the members are educated therefore they are working for themselves to earn their living.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical framework underpinning the study. In this chapter the researcher intends to explain the methodology selected to collect data. The purpose of the study was to explore and understand factors promoting the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic families. According to Babbie (2007, p.88) exploratory studies are conducted for three reasons, among them; one is “to satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for better understanding.” Therefore, the chapter will describe the research design and methodology used to answer the research problem. This includes the research paradigm,

sampling, methods used to collect and analyse collected data, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

4.2 Research design

A research design is a plan made by the researcher to explain every step undertaken, including methods for collecting and analysing the data (Babbie, 2013; Bertram, 2010; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Mouton (2006) indicates that research design shows how the study was conducted in order to answer the research problem. According to Naoum (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2001), research design should match the purpose of the research as well as the methodology used to gather information. Therefore this study located itself in an interpretivist research paradigm.

According to Noor (2008), research in social sciences is categorised into three main paradigms, namely: positivism, interpretivism and criticism. A paradigm is the way in which people organise their observation and reasoning to make sense of things in their daily lives (Babbie, 2007; McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). As a result, research is influenced by the paradigm under which the study is conducted. For instance, the nature of reality differs in paradigms as the positivist researchers believe in a single truth, while interpretivist research believes in multiple truths as it believes that reality is socially constructed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Schutt, 2006).

The researcher in this study decided to use the interpretivist paradigm. The reason for choosing this paradigm is underpinned by the nature of realities it believes in. For instance, interpretivist paradigm believes in multiple truths because it believes that reality is socially constructed. As a result, truth is according to participants' perspective (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Hatch, 2002; Walliman, 2001). So the nature of reality (ontology) underpinning this paradigm seemed to fit the purpose of the study as the researcher would like to understand factors that contribute to academic resilience from participants' perspectives. As a result, the researcher had the assumption that because people's experiences are different, so do their point of view. This paradigm gives the researcher access to understand how people behave and why they behave the way they do (Walliman, 2001).

Furthermore, it is from this paradigm where the researcher would be able to see the world through the participants' point of view. The researcher and the participants work together for the purpose of answering the research question. Interpretivist paradigm uses a qualitative approach which is relevant to rich data collection (Hatch, 2002). It enables the researcher to be part of the phenomenon studied (insider) rather than being just the observer and not included in the study (Walliman, 2011). Bloomberg and Volpe (2008, p.80) state that the purpose of qualitative research is to "examine a social situation or interaction by allowing the researcher to enter the world of others and attempt to achieve a holistic rather than a reductionist understanding." Therefore, interpretivist research enabled the researcher in this study to examine factors that contribute to academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families in the way the participants believe to be, as both are included in the study.

Interpretivists often adopt a qualitative approach because it is in this approach where the researcher is able to interpret the phenomenon studied "in terms of the meaning that people assign to them" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.315). The researcher found this approach to be relevant to this study because it enabled her to understand factors promoting academic resilience from the participants' perspectives.

Qualitative approach, unlike quantitative approach which uses numerical data in order to explain the phenomenon (Muijs, 2011), was found to be more appropriate as the researcher intended to get a better understanding of people's interpretations of their life experiences (Denby, Butroyd, Swift, Price & Glazzard, 2008). This is also in line with Salkind (2012), Nieuwenhuis (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2001) that qualitative research enables the researcher to gather in-depth data from the participants' perspectives in their natural settings. Lowe (2007) and McMillan and Schumacher (2006) state that in qualitative research, the voice of the participants is considered to be the cornerstone. Participants are the source of information of the phenomenon investigated. For this reason the researcher selected the interpretivist approach as the purpose of the study was to explore and understand the factors that contribute to academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families.

4.3 Methodology

According to Denby *et al.* (2008), methodology explains the steps taken in the research in order to respond to the questions which led the researcher to conduct the research. These include the type of approach the study is adopted, sampling method as well as how the data will be collected including data analysis. As stated by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), methodology should link with the purpose of the study as well as research questions and the nature of the study. As a result, the researcher would have to be careful when choosing methodology, especially when dealing with research that requires in-depth data on a sensitive topic so that it will allow the study to produce what it is intended. For instance, in research like this, the researcher would have to select appropriate methods that will fit the type of information to be collected. There should also be a plan from whom the data are going to be collected and why. Therefore this study located itself in qualitative approach as it enabled the researcher to collect in-depth data from respondents' real experiences due to its flexibility and multiple instruments of data collection (Denscombe, 2010).

The researcher had decided to use a case study to collect data. According to Picciano (2004, p.43), a case study is “descriptive research that involves describing and interpreting events, conditions, or situations that are occurring in the present. The purpose of a case study is to examine in detail a specific activity, event, organisation or person(s).” This is in line with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), Murray and Beglar, (2009), Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), Shank and Brown (2007) and Babbie (2007), who point out that a case study is descriptive as researchers using them seek to understand a particular case with close examination so that they could get in-depth information of the phenomenon studied. Therefore a case study was found to suit this study as the researcher wanted to get in-depth data on factors that contribute to academic resilience in learners from poverty stricken families in a single school. Additionally, a case study has flexibility of using different methods (Denscombe, 2010) such as interviews, observation, narrative and others. As a result, the researcher realised that the participants would be more relaxed in a case study because it allows participants to tell their experiences in their natural setting.

Moreover, the researcher selected a case study because “it provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 289). In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a case study describes a phenomenon in a way that enables readers to make their own decision and be able to relate situation to the one they already know. This is one of the importance of a case study.

4.4 Sampling

This is the selection of participants from whom data is collected. Wright (2011) defines sampling to be a process where the researcher selects a subset from a larger population to be used in the study. A population as outlined by Wright (2011) and McMillan and Schumacher (2006), is a larger group from which a sample is selected. Salkind (2012, p.72) asserts that “sampling has one purpose: to select a group of participants that is representative of the general population of all possible participants. Samples are always smaller than populations, and we strive for the sample being selected to be representative of the population.” Therefore it is important for the researcher to be very careful when selecting the sample, as Naoum (2007) suggests. The reason is that if the participants chosen are appropriate, that will help in the production of rich and relevant data. On the other hand, it will help the researcher to utilize time by using only those who are relevant, so it would be possible to collect data that the researcher is looking for. For this reason, the researcher used purposive sampling to select participants that could be used to give their experiences on factors promoting their academic resilience towards their primary schooling. However, the findings from purposive sampling cannot be generalised as it uses a small number of participants (Shank & Brown, 2007).

Purposive sampling means that the participants are selected with the assumption that they are knowledgeable about the phenomenon to be studied and they could provide the researcher with relevant information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Shank & Brown, 2007; Walliman, 2001). For the purpose of this study the researcher selected four grade six learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families attending Katleho Primary School which is situated in a rural area of the Quthing District in

Lesotho. To avoid gender bias two boys and two girls were selected. One of the girls, aged 14, was from a child-headed household with an older sister of sixteen. The other girl, aged 12, was living with her mother in a family of six without anyone being employed. The two boys, both aged 12, came from families with a very small income. The one boy's father being a shepherd and the other one's father a farm labourer in South Africa. The small salary his father earned was acknowledged by one of the boys. With their small salaries shepherds and farmworkers cannot meet all the financial needs of their families. Despite the financial constraints of their families the four learners selected to be participants in the research showed success in their schoolwork. In the second term examination one of the participants obtained the first position in a class of 31 learners. The following table, **Table 4. 1** summarizes the profiles of the four participants.

Table 4.1: Participants' Profiles

Learners names	Age	Sex	Position obtained in class	Average mark obtained	Family Type	Number of family members

Mpho	14 years	Female	4	65	Child-headed	2
Neo	12 years	Male	7	57	Both parents Father (working as a shepherd)	6
Lineo	12 years	Female	1	69	Single parent (mother) unemployed	6
Thabang	12 years	Male	5	62	Both parents (Father works on the farm in South Africa)	4

The learners were purposively selected according to their pass rate in the second term of the year 2012. The reason for choosing the second term is that the researcher made the assumption that at this time learners would be settled and concentrate more on their studies. The pass rate considered was an average mark of 50% (as 50% considered being a second class pass at primary level) and above. These learners were assumed to be academically resilient because they come from poverty stricken families, however, they succeed academically. In order to purposively select these learners, the grade six class-teacher assisted by providing researcher with a class pass-list record. From this pass-list record, the class-teacher identified four learners from poverty stricken families who have passed the tests. Their low socio-economic status was also approved by the principal according to the school records of learners who are funded by The World Vision Programme due to financial difficulties.

Katleho Primary School where this research took place was selected because of its good results (regardless of the problems it is experiencing due to poverty) in Primary School Leaving Examinations (PSLE). PSLE is a common examination written by grade seven learners in

Lesotho which allows them to start their high school career if they have passed. Therefore Katleho Primary School is one of the schools with a good academic record. For instance, the results for the previous year show that this school is among the first forty primary schools with a good pass rate at the district level with a total of 187 primary schools.

An indication that the community in the area where Katleho Primary School is situated is poverty stricken, The World Vision, which is the organisation responsible for helping the needy, especially children, is helping the school by providing clothes and food to the needy learners. The participants in the research are among those who are given food and clothes by the organisation. The researcher was there to collect data at the school when these learners received clothes and shoes from this organisation.

4.5 Methods of data collection

Methods of data collection are instruments used to collect data in research. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008, p.73) say that “the term *methods* commonly denotes specific techniques, procedures, or tools used by the researcher to generate and analyse data.” Data are the information or evidence the researcher collects in order to answer the research questions. There are many different ways of collecting data. However, some considerations should be taken when choosing methods for data collection, depending on the type of the study conducted. For instance, when collecting data that require human privacy due to its sensitivity, the researcher would use methods that will be conducive to the participants to give appropriate information. This means that the researcher should select methods that will suit the type of data to be collected.

According to Brenner (2006) and Nieuwenhuis (2007), methods of data collection are supposed to be appropriate and match the purpose of the research so that those particular methods would help the researcher to collect the data that will answer the research question. Therefore researchers have to be careful when choosing methods of data collection. In this study, the researcher used interviews and observation for collecting data. Schutt (2006) and Silverman (2001) suggest that interviews can be combined with observation. Therefore the researcher used

observation while conducting interviews. The reason for choosing these two was that the researcher assumed that individual interviews would make them to feel comfortable. Unlike in focus group interviews, where they would be with their peers and might feel embarrassed to share their experiences.

4.5.1 Interviews

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) and Bertram (2010) define an interview as a conversation between the researcher and the participant which differs from an everyday conversation because it is aimed at providing the specific data the researcher (interviewer) is looking for. Drew, Hardman and Hosp (2008) indicate that an interview is one of the most common methods used for collecting in-depth data in qualitative research. Seidman (2006, p. 9) adds that “interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Denscombe (2010, p.174) agrees that interviews enable “participants to discuss personal and sensitive issues in an open and honest manner.” According to Walliman (2001), there are two ways of conducting interviews, namely: face-to-face and telephone interviews. In a face-to-face interview, the researcher is talking directly to the interviewee, whereas telephone interviewing is conducted over the telephone.

The importance of an interview, as Walliman (2001) outlines, is that it allows the researcher to identify whether the question is understood or not so that the researcher could clarify it. Walliman (2001) further claims that the researcher also has the opportunity to identify nonverbal communication from the interviewee in face-to-face interviews. This is the advantage of face-to-face interview against conducting interviews over the telephone whereby the interviewer and the interviewee are apart so it is not possible for the researcher to get that opportunity. This is also mentioned by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 409) that “the interview is a flexible tool for data collection, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard.” For this reason the researcher found face-to-face interviews method to be of most importance and appropriate in this study.

Again, the researcher chose to use interviews because of type of participants selected for the study due to their vulnerability caused by their low socio-economic status. Again, interviews were chosen because of the nature of the study as qualitative researchers intend to collect rich data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Therefore the researcher realised that it would give the participants an opportunity to talk about their experiences in the absence of their peers as they were interviewed on a one-to-one basis in a safe place. The researcher asked the principal about a room that would be suitable for conducting interview.

For conducting interviews, the researcher prepared the interview questions in advance. Walliman (2001) claims that there are three different types of interview questions namely: structured, semi-structured and unstructured or open-ended. The researcher used semi- structured questions to conduct the interviews. In semi-structured interviews as Nieuwenhuis (2007) maintains, the researcher is able to probe when necessary. Probing means to ask some questions that would encourage a participant to talk more and give further information. This is important because it enables the participants to talk more about their experiences in relation to the information which the researcher is looking for.

If the researcher is looking for in-depth data, the use of semi-structured interviews is appropriate because such questions allow the respondents to answer according to their views rather than those questions that require either 'yes' or 'no' responses (Walliman, 2001). In the current study the researcher used semi-structured interview to ask the participants about factors that contribute to their academic resilience in their primary schooling. To test whether the questions were understandable so that some improvements could be made, the researcher used three learners in grade seven with similar circumstances with the participants in the sense that they also come from poverty stricken families but succeed academically. This is in line with Walliman (2011) that piloting should be done on persons with similarities to the participants. From there, the interviews commenced.

Four learners participated in the study. These were two boys and two girls between the age of twelve and fourteen as already mentioned. They were interviewed at lunch after having their food from The World Food Programme (WFP) which is prepared at school. The WFP is the

world organisation that provides food to primary schools in Lesotho particularly in the rural areas.

The interviews were conducted over a period of two weeks. In the first week the researcher met the participants to talk about the study and how interviews would be conducted including the use of a tape-recorder and the reason for doing so. This was also done in order to build trust between the researcher and the participants. It was also explained to the participants what would be done with the collected data. For instance, how the data would be kept and how the findings would be reported so that they could not be identified. The researcher assured them confidentiality and anonymity in relation to their responses.

4.5.2 Observation

Observation means watching carefully the behaviour shown by the participant in order to collect specific information. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.457) assert that “observational data may be useful for recording non-verbal behaviour in natural or nontrived ...” For instance, the researcher as participant observer while conducting interviews, observed the learners behaviour and recorded significant information that would add on the findings. The researcher observed the participants expressive behaviour while interviewing. According to Costanzo and Archer (1989) expressive behaviour is indicated by facial expression and the body language to show a person’s feeling. For instance, sadness, happiness and excitement can be shown by facial expression while the body language can be used for example, to show emphasis by using a fist.

The researcher observed the participants facial expressions as well as their body language. According to Nieuwenhuis (2007) the researcher may observe participants during the interview without any intervention but with the assumption of collecting data that will add to the understanding of the phenomenon studied. Therefore the researcher used observation together with interviews as Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2008) suggest that observation should be used in combination with other methods. This is in line with Silverman (2001) that interviews can be combined with observation. Schutt (2006, p.106) adds that “observations may supplement measures obtained through questioning.” Therefore the researcher watched the participants’ body language while answering the interviews’ questions and recorded them as field notes.

4.6 Data analysis

According to Hatch (2002, p.148) data analysis is as follows:

Data analysis is a systemic search for meaning. It is a way to process qualitative data so that what has been learned can be communicated to others. Analysis means organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanation, make interpretation, mount critiques or generate theories. It often involves synthesis, evaluation, interpretation, categorization, hypothesizing, comparison, and pattern findings.

The researcher gave meaning to the collected data by organizing it. McMillian and Schumacher (2001) maintain that there is no other way the researcher could interpret data collected without organizing it. Nieuwenhuis (2007, p.99) outlines that data analysis “tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analysing their perceptions, attitudes, understanding, knowledge, feelings and experiences in an attempt to approximate their construction of the phenomenon.” Therefore the researcher used ‘coding’ to make meaning from the data collected. Nieuwenhuis (2007) defines coding as reading the transcripts very carefully line by line as to identify phrases that have a meaning. This is in line with McMillian and Schumacher (2001, p.467) that “coding is the process of dividing data into parts by a classification system.”

The data on factors considered to promote academic resilience in learners from poverty stricken families were collected by means of observation and semi-structured interviews in which a tape-recorder was used to record their responses. As these learners are assumed to be academically resilient because of their academic success in the presence of their hardships they experience, the first part of the findings shows the adversities these learners encounter at home as well as in school. This is followed by factors found to be promoters of academic resilience.

4.7 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the term used in qualitative research to answer the questions that may arise from the readers about the study whether the findings reflect participants' real lived experiences or not (Bertram, 2010). As Graneheim and Lundman (2003) suggest, the study has to show the following characteristics: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability.

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) and Shento (2004), credibility refers to the ability of the researcher to convince the reader about the findings of the research so that the reader could believe that what is claimed comes from the participants themselves. For example, the findings represent their feelings, thoughts and experiences. To enhance credibility, the researcher used verbatim quotes in the discussion of the findings to give the exact words as spoken by the respondents. Additionally, the researcher asked the participants to verify whether those were their responses, or not, after transcribing the interviews. This was done to eliminate bias from the researcher while on the other hand it would increase the credibility of the study.

Dependability, as Shento (2004) maintains, is about the researcher's attempt for a further conduction of a similar study. This is done by showing limitations and how the follow up study could be improved for further exploration on the phenomenon including recommendations on the study.

Confirmability in research, according to Morrow (2005), is to what extent the researcher demonstrates and convinces the reader that the findings are emerging from the participants and not from the researcher on the phenomenon studied. Therefore the researcher used a tape recorder to record participants while interviewed. This also helped to preserve data from loss as the researcher could not be able to take note of everything said during the interviews. The importance of an audiotape is that it enabled the researcher to play it repeatedly while transcribing raw data. This added to the accuracy of the findings.

Furthermore, the researcher used verbatim responses to report the findings. Verbatim transcripts mean the exact words used by the respondents without adding or omitting anything to support the results found from the study. This also helped the researcher from being biased and used everything the way it was said. Furthermore, the use of triangulation is also considered to increase trustworthiness of the study. Triangulation means the use of more than one method for data

collection as stipulated by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) and Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2008). Therefore the researcher used interviews with a tape recorder and observation to enhance trustworthiness of the study. All these contributed to the reality of the findings according to the participants' world.

Transferability of the findings in the study as Shento (2004) outlines it, is the ability of the researcher to explain and give a full picture of the study so that the reader could make his or her own justification on situations similar to the phenomenon studied. If the researcher has explained the phenomenon as clearly as possible, the readers may transfer what they have read to the situation they already know and create a picture of similar circumstance (Shento, 2004). To make this clear, the researcher in this study described the venue where the study took place and the learners who participated as well as reporting their responses in verbatim to show participants' lived experiences.

4.8 Ethical issues

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) educational research is governed by ethical procedures that should be followed by social science researchers because participants have to be respected as human beings. Therefore, this is done to protect participants from any harm, physically, emotionally and psychologically (Salkind, 2012; Walliman, 2011; Babbie, 2007; Shank & Brown, 2007; Brenner, 2006; Mouton, 2006). This is in line with Goddard and Melville (2001, p.49) that "the researcher must remember that the subjects are individual human beings, and treat them with appropriate respect." As a result, every person who wishes to conduct human research has to be very careful not to do any harm to the participants in the study. As people have rights and should be respected. The researcher requested permission to conduct the study in Lesotho from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, permission was granted from stakeholders in Lesotho. These include the District Education Officer, the principal of the school where the study took place, school governing body and the class teacher of grade six as well as parents, caregivers and learners themselves. The researcher asked for permission to interview the selected learners from parents, guardians or caregivers as they are still under the age of eighteen. Three of

them are twelve years old and the fourth is fourteen. They were given consent forms to complete at home through permission of their parents, guardians or caregivers. Furthermore, a thorough explanation was given to the participants before the study commenced. The explanation covered reason for conducting the study, how the study would be conducted and its benefit to the participants, the teachers and the community at large. Fink (2006, p.36) outlines that “people are more likely to cooperate if they appreciate the importance of the subject matter.” Moreover, they were told that the study was voluntarily so they could participate only if they were interested. Again, they were told that they were free to withdraw at any time they wished without being discriminated against.

In addition, the researcher asked for permission to record the interviews. They were also told that they had the right to say ‘no’ if they were not willing to be recorded. The participants were informed that the audio-tape would be kept safe by the researcher while in use. Thereafter, it would be handed to the supervisor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal where it would be kept safely for five years and be destroyed after that.

Additionally, anonymity was assured to the participants as the researcher would use pseudonyms instead of their real names. The researcher also explained to the participants that their responses would stay confidential (Walliman, 2011; Jansen, 2007). These explanations helped them to feel comfortable that their privacy would not be violated. Again, they were told that they had the right not to give the researcher permission for publishing the findings if they were not willing to do so.

4.9 Limitations

Although interviews are appropriate for rich data collection, they are time consuming as the researcher had to interview one participant at a time. Again, when transcribing the interviews as they were taped for validity and for the sake of not losing any data, a lot of time was spent and as a result it was time consuming (Denscombe, 2010; Seidman, 2006). Furthermore, interviews need careful training of the interviewer (Fink, 2008). This also needs time. Additionally, research is bias as researchers may be interested in hearing only what they are looking for as a result, omitting of information of no interest to the researcher may be experienced. To lessen this, the

researcher used a tape-recorder so that she could use the words from the participants as they are, without any interruption from the researcher. She also used the field notes which were taken while interviewing. All this was done to lessen bias although observation is not a reliable tool as two people observing one incident may come up with different interpretations.

Another limitation is that qualitative research does not allow the findings to be generalised (Bertram, 2010) due to the small number of respondents it uses. For this reason, the findings from this study would not be generalised however transferability could be made for a situation similar to this study.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the research design and the methodology used in the study to gather information concerning the factors promoting academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. The chapter outlined the use of an interpretivist paradigm and its importance as it helps to collect in-depth data due to its flexibility of multiple instruments. It also described the methods used to collect data, their advantages and limitations. The chapter also explained the measures taken considering ethical issues. The next chapter is about data analysis, findings and discussion.

CHAPTER FIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explained the research methodology used in the study. This chapter will offer an analysis of the data collected and discussions of the findings. It is also aimed at linking the study to the research conducted before and the theories underpinning the study. The data were collected from four participants in grade six, two boys and two girls. The study was conducted for the purpose of gathering information on factors that contribute to their academic resilience. The data were analysed and categorised into themes. These were grouped into

problems encountered by learners from poverty stricken families. The second group was about factors considered to promote their academic resilience. The following themes were generated from data analysis: a) *Problems*, lack of resources, child abuse, isolation and discrimination from peers and b) *Factors considered as promoting academic resilience*, hope for the future, problem-solving skills, self-esteem and support.

The key research questions were:

3. What are the problems experienced by learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families?
4. What are the factors promoting academic resilience of learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families?

The aims of the study were:

- To establish what problems are experienced by learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families.
- To identify the factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged learners.

Research claims academic failure for learners coming from socio-economically disadvantaged families and correlates their low achievement with the lack of resources (Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Curley, Ssewamala & Han, 2010; Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Barry, 2006; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Clemente, 2001; Eamon, 2001). That is why those who achieve academically under such hardships are considered to be academically resilient (Gizir & Aydin, 2009).

5.2 Data analysis and findings

Raw data must be organized in such a way that they have meaning, and make sense to the reader. Therefore the researcher had to analyse the collected data so that the readers could grasp its meaning and understand what they are reading and as a result be able to familiarise the findings

with that already known (Shento, 2004). The processing of data into a meaningful context is called data analysis (Babbie, 2013).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) indicate that the researcher has to describe what the study reveals by explaining thoroughly the findings so that the readers are convinced about the conclusions and be able to relate what they read to their world as well as transferring what is read to a similar situation. Therefore the researcher is going to discuss how the data from interviews and observation were analysed thus the reader could get the meaning of it.

Firstly, the researcher transcribed the collected data from the audio-tape into written material in order to allow coding. By coding, we mean the selection of words or phrases in sentences with a significant meaning as outlined by Babbie (2013) and Rubin and Rubin (2005). Then the researcher looked for similarities and differences that appeared from the data and used different colours according to their categories. Finally, the findings were grouped into two categories: (a) *Problems*: lack of resources, child-abuse, isolation and discrimination and (b) *Promoters of academic resilience*: hope for the future, problem-solving skills, self-esteem and support.

5.3 The findings

The findings were categorised into two groups. The first group is about the problems the learners experience due to their families' low socio-economic status. These are evidence of their resilience in relation to their education as they overcome hardship experiences which put them at risk of failure according to research as already mentioned before. The second group will be on the factors considered as promoting learners' academic resilience. According to research, learners from poverty stricken families do not perform well and in other cases they drop out from school in search for a job. Therefore, those who persist with their studies and perform well are said to be academically resilient (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Theron, 2006).

5.4 Problems experienced by socio-economically disadvantaged learners

In this context, problems are considered to be anything experienced by these participants that may hinder them from effective learning due to their low socio-economic status. These may be found at home as well as in the school where they are attending.

5.4.1 Lack of resources

Resources are essential things, at home and in school, which every learner requires to be successful in his or her schooling. However, learners from poor families lack many of the required resources.

5.4.1.1 Lack of food

The investigation reveals that the main challenge faced by learners from poor families is hunger. All four participants reported that they lack adequate nutrition because of insufficient or no money available in their families for food. They admitted that there is often no food to eat at home. They further stated that sometimes they go to bed without eating. Pseudonyms are used for participants' responses below. The two boys are named Neo and Thabang and the girls Mpho and Lineo. Following are their responses to this question: What problems do you encounter at home?

Neo: *“The most problem we have at home is lack of food. Sometimes we go to bed without eating. Sometimes my mother asks for maize meal from our neighbours or borrows money from them.”*

Lineo: *“Sometimes we do not have food at home. I use to go to my grandmother's house in a place called Malimong (pseudonym) to ask for food.”*

Thabang: *“At times we go to school without eating.”*

One participant who was living with her grandmother but now living in a child-headed family with her sixteen year old sister said that her grandmother used not to give her food including meat.

Mpho: *“Sometimes we do not have meal, we eat pap without relish.”*

From the responses above, lack of food is found to be a major problem among these learners. This is supported by previous studies (Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen & Fritz, 2011; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Bennel, 2005; Mbele, 2005) that learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families experience persistent hunger. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Poston, 2009) food is considered to be one of the necessities which human beings should have in order for them to function well and for their well-being and development, particularly children. Consequently these learners suffer and they are expected to perform poorly at school. This is the reason why those who perform well despite such conditions, are said to be academically resilient and therefore succeed in their academic work (Thornton & Sanchez, 2010; Gizir & Aydin, 2009).

This is in line with the findings from the study conducted by Maarman (2009) that learners from poverty stricken families do not have enough food. Grant, Jasson and Lawrence (2010) and Maarman (2009) further reveal that sometimes the food these learners receive at school is the only nutritional food they get for the day because they have got nothing to eat at home. This is in line with Kalenga (2010) that sometimes some of the learners who come from poverty stricken families fall down in the morning while gathering to pray due to hunger. Furthermore, the study conducted by Dass-Brailsford (2005) also reveals food as a major obstacle in learners who experience poverty. This is also supported by Lehlaha (2011) who says that sometimes learners go to school without eating anything in the morning.

This situation may lead to a loss of concentration in the classroom as well as not showing any interest in participating in classroom activities. This is in line with Kalenga's assertion (2010) study that learners who are hungry, even though they could present themselves physically in the classroom, their minds are about their hunger and how to get something to eat. USAID (2008) indicates that children who are not hungry are able to concentrate and participate in classroom activities. To show the significance of food especially in children, Chirwa (2009, p.1) claims that:

The importance of food is self-evidence. Without food, there cannot be human life. For a person to develop properly mentally and physically, he or she must have adequate food of suitable nutritional value. Thus, for children in particular the right of access to food is of paramount importance.

Chirwa (2009) emphasises the importance of food as the cornerstone of human's survival, development, well-being and achievement as already mentioned. However, learners who participated in this study succeeded academically as their performance is from fifty percent and above even though they experience hunger in their families. All four participants stated that lack of food is their major problem. This is the reason why those who succeed in their studies under such circumstances are considered to be academically resilient (Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Thornton & Sanchez, 2010; Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

5.4.1.2 Insufficient school resources

The participants also mentioned that they lack resources they need for their schooling. This is the response to the question: What problems do you encounter at school?

Neo: *“Sometimes it happens that I do not have uniform and shoes. Sometimes at school, I do not have exercise books or a pen so I ask Sir to borrow me, if he does not have; I borrow it from other learners.”*

Mpho: *“At times I do not have a pen at school and I ask other learners to borrow me.”*

Lineo: *“Sometimes we do not go to school because we do not have soap to wash the uniform.”*

Thabang: *“Sometimes I do not have enough exercise books at school.”*

Problems like these contribute to learners' absenteeism which may affect their learning negatively. The fact that they decide to stay at home rather than going to school with dirty clothes is that they prevent themselves against mockery from their peers. This is in line with the findings by Pillay (2011) that learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families feel embarrassed to go to school with the same and dirty uniform. This leads to unnecessary absenteeism which is likely to influence their performance negatively at school while on the other hand affects their self-esteem. However, these learners continue with their schooling because they have the goal of achieving academically for their future.

5.4.2 Child-abuse

Child-abuse is the situation whereby children are treated in a way that makes them feel unhappy. This uncomfortable condition may appear in different forms namely physical, verbal and emotional abuse. Physical abuse is the state whereby the victim experiences ill-treatment from the perpetrator (Alvy, 2008; Cleaver, 2011). This includes beating bitterly while verbal abuse is when the abuser does not harm the victim physically, for example by hitting, instead uses insulting words that are full of mockeries and condemnations as to belittle and hurt the victim (Norman, 2008). Finally, emotional abuse as outlined by Norman (2008) is the state where children are neglected by their parents or caregivers intentionally; as a result children are deprived of the nurturing they should receive from their parents. Child-abuse emerged from the study.

5.4.2.1 Emotional abuse

Mpho revealed that she experienced physical abuse from her grandmother. This was her response to the question that required them to tell about their problems at home. Mpho was sad when saying this.

Mpho: *“I was not given food and meat (by grandmother) when it was bought.”*

This is a serious abuse as it can lead children to commit crimes such as theft while on the other hand they could be easily sexually abused for food in turn. This is in contrast with the findings by other researchers such as Makhonza (2006) where grandparents found to play a significant role by taking care of their grandchildren and taking responsibility of protecting them. They provide them with basic needs, specifically food, and encourage them to attend school because they believe that school will help them to live a better life.

5.4.2.2 Verbal abuse

The study also reveals verbal abuse. This was shown by the responses from Mpho. She said:

“My grandmother used to insult me when she was drunk. She kept on telling me that she does not know where my mother is.”

This appears to seriously affect Mpho because she is neglected by her mother. The only thing she knows about her mother is that she is somewhere in South Africa. She further mentioned that she would not be able to even recognise her because she has left long time ago. It is very bad for children who are abandoned by parents because they do not receive parental affection. According to Mthiyane (2003), parents are the immediate people whom children learn from. This is also supported by Alvy (2008) when he says that parents are the immediate teachers whom children learn from. Therefore, if they are not given love by their parents, they are likely to do the same to their own children when they grow up.

5.4.3 Isolation and discrimination from peers

The situation of poverty may result in children being discriminated against because they seem different from others (Lehlaha, 2011; Pillay, 2011; Khanare, 2008). Neo said the following:

“Sometimes it happens that I wear clothes which do not fit me well because I have been given by other people as a result they are big. Some of the learners laugh at me because of that.”

Eamon (2001) posits that children from poverty stricken families may be stigmatized and isolated from their peers. When they were asked to tell their relationship with their friends, Mpho said:

“I do not have friends.”

This is in line with Eamon (2001, p.258) that “poor children are more likely to experience peer rejection, lower popularity and conflictual peer relations than non-poor children.” Generally, children like to have a good appearance and acknowledged by their peers. Therefore, they feel ashamed if they are mocked. If such situation continues, it affects them negatively and destroys their self-esteem. Therefore teachers should encourage learners to respect and appreciate their

uniqueness. Both learners from advantaged and disadvantaged families should be taught that human beings have to be respected regardless their situations and differences. If learners could bear that in mind, they are likely to be helpful rather than looking down upon others.

It is also evident from the study that learners from poverty stricken families experience discrimination from their peers. Lineo stated:

“When I go to school wearing dirty clothes other learners do not like to sit next to me. Therefore, I do not go to school when I do not have soap to wash my uniform as a result.”

This is not good because these learners are still growing and if they experience rejection from their peers, it could affect them negatively. Lehlaha (2011) states that children can feel uncomfortable because of the way they clothe themselves. This could also affect their well-being and influence their concentration in the class as this could have an impact psychologically.

5.5 Factors considered to promote academic resilience

These are positive factors from the study considered to contribute academic resilience. They are categorised into two groups namely internal and external motivating factors. Internal motivating factors are those promoters within the participants themselves while external motivating factors are from the learners’ social surrounding.

5.5.1 Internal factors

5.5.1.1 Hope for the future

The major finding emerging from this study is hope for the future. All the participants mentioned that they want to live a different life from the contemporary in the future. The researcher asked them to tell her the reason underpinning their academic success which is the key question for this study. The question asked was: ‘What are the reasons for the success you have in your school work? All the participants mentioned that they want to work for themselves so that they would

be able to earn a living. They mentioned that they want to get jobs like teaching, nursing and policing where they would earn money to look after their own families as well as helping their parents and siblings. This is in line with Curly, Sswamala and Han (2010) and Ramawtar (2010) that education is the key instrument to overcome poverty. Neo commented:

“I want to have a future in my life and have a job which is highly recommended like teaching, policing, nursing and so forth so that I could earn money to support my children if I would have. I would also want to buy my siblings clothes and support my parents.”

This is in accordance with the findings from the study conducted by Lothe and Heggen (2003) that hope was a significant instrument in building resilience in youth at-risk. Lothe and Heggen (2003, p.319) further indicate that “hope seems to make a difference in their lives.” This is evidenced by one of the participants in the current study where he was happy and smiling while he mentioned the reason for his academic success. Although he was wearing clothes which were too big for him that he got from people wearing bigger size, he was happy to tell why he worked hard in his studies.

Snyder *et al.* (2002, p.820) define hope as “the process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the motivation to move toward those goals and the ways to achieve those goals.” Research shows that hope is a motivational tool and influences people in a positive way even if they are under difficult conditions (Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen & Fritz, 2011; Pillay, 2011; Style, 2011; Newell & Van Ryzin, 2007; Theron, 2006; Borman & Ranchuba, 2001). Therefore the participants’ goal is to succeed so that their lives could be changed. Thus they are intrinsically motivated to reach their expectation which is living a prosperous life in the future. This supports the theory underpinning the study that youth who are goal-oriented succeed academically (WestEd, 2003).

Furthermore, the responses show that these learners are not considering only themselves, but also their families. The findings from the study conducted by Gross (2011) revealed that learners who have high expectations for their siblings are performing well at school. The participants stated:

Lineo: “When I finish my schooling, I want to be a teacher. I want to buy my mother some clothes. I also want to build her a house and buy her a car.”

Thabang: *“The reason for my academic success... is that when I finish schooling I could be able to work for myself and for my parents and siblings. I want to be a teacher so that I could earn money to buy needed things and give some (money) to my parents in order to buy meal and other essential household. I also want to buy my siblings’ clothes.”*

Mpho: *“I want to be educated that is why I work hard. I want to be a nurse when I grow up so that I could earn money for survival. I will also help my sister financially.”*

According to the responses above, the participants perceive education to be the way out of the situation they experience at the moment which is poverty. This is similar to the findings by Dass-Brailsford (2005) that learners from poverty stricken families view education as a form of transforming their lives in the future so that their own families would not have the same experience. All four participants mentioned this in the interviews with a considerably strong emphasis. They were excited and it could be read on their faces that what they said come from their heart. Newell and Van Ryzin (2007) assert that hopeful learners perform better in their studies and their optimistic view helps them to reach their goals even if it could take a long time. Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen and Fritz (2011) reveal that learners with hope, work hard in their studies as a result, they succeed academically.

5.5.1.2 Problem- solving skills

It is suggested that learners who are resilient have good problem-solving skills (Style, 2011, Snyder, 2002; Clemente, 2001). It emerged from the study that learners who are resilient also have the skill for solving their problems. They look for ways of getting help from other people they are familiar with. This is what these participants appear to have. For instance, one of the participants said that when they do not have anything to eat, she asked for help from her grandmother. Additionally, three participants mentioned that when they do not have something to write with, they ask for it from other learners or from the teacher rather than staying in the class without writing. This shows that they have the ability to solve their problems. Furthermore, when they do not have food at home, they commented:

Lineo: *“I use to go to my grandmother to ask for food if we do not have anything to eat.”*

Thabang: *“I did not know how to write Sesotho, I was able to speak it only. Therefore, I asked for help from my teacher. Now I am doing well”*

The responses above demonstrate that these learners are able to solve their daily problems. This is supported by Style (2011) that one of the characteristics of resilient people is the ability to solve their problems. Additionally, Thornton and Sanchez (2010) assert that children who are said to be resilient have problem-solving skills that enable them to overcome their hardships and therefore achieve their goals effectively. Clemente (2001) reveals that learners, who are academically resilient, use adult people whom they consider their role models for their daily needs. Lineo shows that instead of staying hungry, she asks for help from her grandmother. This shows that they are able to find means of dealing with their problems. This evidence supports the theory underpinning the study that resilient youth have the ability to solve their problems (WestEd, 2003).

5.5.1.3 Self-esteem

Self-esteem is the way one feels about oneself either positively or negatively, how worthy one perceives to be (Miller & Moran, 2012; Feldman, 2011, Alvy, 2008; Plummer, 2007; Hartley-Brewer, 2005; Humphreys, 2002). This means that a person who feels positive will have a positive self-esteem and can face the daily challenges without doubt. On the other hand, if a person is not happy about himself, that could lead to his low self-esteem.

According to Miller and Moran (2012) learners who feel good about themselves and knowing that they are capable of doing well as they know their strong and weak points and acknowledging that they are not good at all things, succeed in their academic work. Hartley-Brewer (2005) points out that a positive self-esteem in children helps them to build resilience so that they could be strong to face challenges. On the other hand, those who are claimed to have a low self-esteem are said to be scared of challenges, expect themselves to do poorly academically and readily give up (Miller & Moran, 2012; Hartley-Brewer, 2005; Feldman, 2004). Miller and Moran (2012, p.5) add that “there is a general consensus that low self-esteem individuals tend to underachieve, be more at risk from a range of social and personal ills and tend to live less fulfilling lives.”

It is suggested that learners who are academically resilient have a positive self-esteem (Style, 2011). This is revealed in the empirical study by one of the participants when the researcher asked her about whom she consulted when given homework. Mpho pointed out:

“We have not been given the assignment that I did not know.”

This response shows that Mpho is confident and believes that she is capable of doing well in her studies. She explained that she does homework without any help from other people because she used to find the homework easy. This reveals that Mpho believes in herself and knows that she can do well. This is supported by Borman and Ranchuba (2001) that learners who believe in themselves do well academically.

Another participant mentioned that one of the reasons for her academic success is that she is studying hard. Lineo commented:

“I listen attentively in the classroom.”

This response also adds to the point that learners who are academically resilient believe in themselves and that they can do well in their studies. The reason for Lineo to pay attention in the classroom is related to the goal she has assigned to herself which is to succeed academically for a better future.

5.5.2 External factors

5.5.2.1 Support

This is any kind of assistance that the participants receive from different sources.

5.5.2.1.1 Teacher-learner relationship

This is the way the teacher and learners relate. If the teacher is open to his or her learners, that openness enables learners to disclose their problems. This is supported by the findings from the study conducted by Sosa (2011) that a good relationship between the teachers and learners encourages learners to work hard at school as they are also given encouraging comments as well as high expectations from their teachers. Sosa (2011) further maintains that learners are not

scared to consult their teachers for any clarifications concerning their studies if there is any misunderstanding.

The findings from this research revealed that there is a good relation between teachers and learners in this school. The participants get help at any time they need. For example, they do not hesitate to ask for help from their teachers particularly the principal. Mpho commented:

“When we are asked to cut off our hair at school, Mrs Sefate (the principal’s pseudonym) assists me if there is nobody to cut my hair.”

It is illustrated by the above response that there is a good teacher-learner relationship in this school. It illustrates that teachers are doing more than just performing their task which is teaching. Khanare (2008) indicates that some teachers are not there to teach maths and science but go an extra mile in helping learners who are in need of help. Furthermore, Lehlaha (2011) claims that where there is a good relationship between teachers and learners in a school, learners feel accepted and belonging and as a result their academic performance improves. Moreover, Worley (2007) also indicates that a teacher-learner relationship is proved to play a significant role in developing positive perceptions in learners and contributes to learners’ academic achievement.

Furthermore, it appears that the principal of Katleho Primary School cares for the learners who need help, as a result, her teachers also do likewise. She is there to help them for their diverse personal difficulties. This is confirmed by Lineo when saying:

“When I do not have money to pay collection at school, Mrs. Sefate pays for me.”

Sometimes the principal provides the needy learners with money for extra-mural activities. This was said by Thabang who is a football player at school.

“I was supposed to go to schools’ sports but there was no money at home. The school asked my parents to pay half of the total amount. The transport was R70.00 so my mother was asked to pay R35.00 and the school contributed another R35.00 Then I was able to go and participated in the sports.”

Furthermore the participants said that they get words of encouragement at school. Teachers and the principal keep on telling them to concentrate on their studies so that they could work for themselves when they grow up. Moloji *et al.* (2010) reveal that words of encouragement from teachers work as a motivation to learners. This appears to play a significant part psychologically in these learners. The way this comment was said by each of these learners showed that they are really feeling confident by such comments. It was shown by their facial expressions that such comments are helping them to continue with their studies. Neo even used his hands to stress this comment. He said:

“I am encouraged by the principal as well as other teachers to work hard.”

It is evident from research that school support plays a significance role in building academic resilience in learners and influences their performance positively (Pillay, 2011; Gizir & Aydin, 2009; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Mthiyane, 2003). Additionally, the study conducted by Moloji *et al.* (2010) on what contributes to learners’ academic success in rural schools revealed that teachers who listen to their learners and give them the support they need are contributing to their academic success. Lehlaha (2011) asserts that some teachers go beyond their teaching duties by providing support to learners who are in need. For instance, the study conducted by Moloji *et al.* (2010) revealed that some of the teachers adopt learners who are at-risk like those who are living alone and having no one who is looking after. Others provide them with survival skills (Pillay, 2010).

From the discussion above, teacher-learner relationship appears to play a significant role in the participants’ lives. The significance of encouraging words is demonstrated by the study conducted by Grant, Jasson and Lawrence (2010) that learners who are encouraged by teachers are highly motivated and see the importance of attending school because their teachers keep on explaining the value of being educated. Grant, Jasson and Lawrence (2010) further assert that in the school where learners get care and support whenever needed, such learners build in themselves a sense of belonging as well as developing hope that enables them to withstand and overcome their everyday hardships.

5.5.2.1.2 Peer support

It is revealed in this study that peer support plays an important role in academic achievement in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. Neo stated:

“My friends are good and positive to me. They are not like other learners. They do not laugh at me. They encourage me to work hard and I also encourage them to work hard. My friends treat me well.”

It is outlined by Becker and Luthar (2002) that there is a possibility of positive influence towards schooling if learners have friends who are positive towards their studies. If they have a negative attitude towards schooling, the influence would be likewise.

5.5.2.1.3 Parental support

This is the role played by parents considered to have a positive influence towards their children's academic achievement. Parents may help their children, for example, by providing them with adequate time at home to study, arrange a place conducive to learning and help them to do their homework or just to be there for security (Wood, 2012). Furthermore, parents may schedule their children's time for different activities such as playing with their friends, doing their studies, communicating with other members of the family as well as doing household chores. Lineo remarked:

“My mother says that I have to study before I could go to play.”

From this response, Lineo shows that her mother cares for her studies. Research conducted previously on academic resilience revealed that parents' involvement in their children's education plays a significant part (Wood, 2012; Makhonza, 2006; Mthiyane, 2003). Wood (2012) further reveals that parental support is the foundation of their children's academic success regardless of the family status in relation to income. This is revealed in the current study as the learner who obtains the highest mark comes from a supporting family although it is experiencing difficulties due to poverty.

5.5.2.1.4 Community support

It is assumed that the community which cares for its youth contributes to their wellbeing as well as their studies (WestEd, 2003). This is revealed by the participants in the current study when talking about help they get from the community. Mpho comes from a child-headed family. She commented:

“If we do not have maize meal, we go to Mrs Mohapi (pseudonym). She goes to a shop to buy us maize meal.”

Another positive response regarding the community from Neo is that sometimes he receives clothes from the members of the community.

Neo: *“Sometimes I receive clothes from the community especially shoes and trousers.”*

This is also revealed by Pillay (2011) and Makhonza (2006) that the community supports vulnerable children with clothes and food. Another comment from Mpho about the community is as follows:

“My neighbours encourage me. They say that I should work hard at school.”

Neighbours were also mentioned by another participant showing the importance of their comments. Neo said:

“When I meet my neighbours on the way from school, they usually ask me the class which I am doing and I tell them that I am in grade six. They say that I should continue working hard.”

These learners were very happy while reporting these comments about their neighbours. It is from the positive comments and high expectations that learners could be encouraged (WestEd, 2003). This is what the researcher observed from the participants. It appears that positive remarks could be used as reinforcement to motivate learners who are experiencing difficulties.

The asset-based approach by Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) emphasises the effectiveness of available resources in the community where those resources are used for the whole community. This is shown in this study where the community supports by helping with tangible and

intangible resources for the benefit of children who are in need of help. Moreover, the community also helps Neo's family where his mother asks for meal from their neighbours as well as money. Furthermore the community's words of encouragement also play a significant part in the participants' academic work as the words of encouragement energise them to continue regardless the situation they find themselves in.

The fact that teachers together with the principal help these learners to continue with their schooling confirms the asset-based theory which claims working together and using available resources to be crucial (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006). It is established from this study that collaboration of teachers, parents as well as the community is essential for learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. It is also evident from the research that if learners at risk are supported by at least one adult, that helps them to do well in their studies regardless their adversity. High expectations also motivate learners to fulfil those expectations (WestEd, 2003). This is found in the current study that encouraging words and high expectations influence learners positively in their studies. It is also found that high expectations from learners themselves work as their promoter to academic resilience as the learners have a goal to be fulfilled in their lives. Therefore work hard towards their goals.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter showed how the collected data were analysed and categorised into themes. It also discussed the findings that emerged from the study and are supported by the findings from previous similar studies. This study revealed lack of food as the strongest obstacle these participants experience. This was also found in the previous research on learners from low socio-economic families. However, there are also factors that considered promoting academic resilience.

The main factor found to contribute to their academic resilience is their hope for the future. They claimed education to be their way out of poverty as they mentioned that they would like to live a prosperous life and they could manage to get there only by education. They believe that unless they are educated, nothing could help them to get out of the situation they are experiencing at the moment. This seemed to act as their motivation that helped them to overcome their daily

problems. The next chapter concludes the study. It provides a summary, and limitations of the study. It also outlines recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contains a summary, limitations of the study and recommendations. The previous chapter discussed how the study was analysed. It also discussed the findings from collected data which were supported by the findings from other researchers and the theories underpinning the study. The findings are the answer to the purpose of the study which was to explore factors promoting academic resilience in learners from poverty stricken families. This was a case study done in Lesotho in one rural school in grade six using four learners who succeed academically regardless their adversities. Following is the summary of the findings.

6.2 Summary

The study was conducted in order to explore and understand factors that promote the academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. Hope for the future emerged from this study and was found to be the major factor considered promoting academic resilience of the participants. This supports the RYDM Theoretical Framework used for this study that youth who are goal oriented succeed academically as they work hard to achieve what they desire (WestEd, 2003). This is similar to the findings by Mokgatle-Nthabu, Van der Westhuizen and Fritz (2011) and Newell and Van Ryzin (2007) that students who have hope for the future work hard in their studies to fulfil their dreams. Snyder *et al.* (2002) agree that learners with hope for the future succeed academically. The findings from the study conducted by Theron (2006) also revealed hope to be the major promoter of academic achievement.

Support from different sources was found to play an important role in building academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. It was established in this study that the school, parents, peers and the community play a significant part in the success of the participants. For example, teachers contributed by supporting the participants with resources such as pens and money. They also encouraged the participants to work hard. Parents, peers and the community helped as well. This supports the RYDM theory that if learners get support from their social surrounding such as parents, teachers, peers and the community, they achieve academically (WestEd, 2003). Therefore it is crucial for adults such as teachers and the community to support the needy. It is revealed in the study that even words of encouragement could be used as a promoter of academic resilience.

Furthermore, the respondents seemed to have problem-solving skills that helped them to deal with their daily problems effectively. The theory underpinning this study shows that youth with problem-solving skills have the ability to improve socially, health as well as academically (WestEd, 2003).

Moreover, self-esteem emerged from the study as one of factors considered promoting academic resilience in learners from poverty stricken families. They believe in themselves that they are capable of doing well in their studies and this encourages them to continue with their schooling.

Peer support is also considered to promote academic resilience. If learners get support from their peers, they are motivated and as a result, work hard to fulfil their peers' expectations especially when they are reliable. This is supported by the RYDM theory (WestEd, 2003) that peer support encourages academic resilience. It would benefit learners if they could be aware of their friends

because they may influence them either positively or negatively if they are not interested in education. In this study peer support was found to be a factor that considered promoting academic resilience.

6.3 Limitations of the study

- Due to time and financial constraints, the study used only four learners from one grade, therefore, the results cannot be generalized.
- The case study was conducted in one school only situated in a rural area. A large case study from rural and urban schools could give more reliable findings.
- Interviews with teachers in the school on how they help learners from poverty stricken families could add to a better insight on the issue investigated.
- Parents and community members could also be used as respondents in a study like this to provide information how they promote academic resilience.
- The researcher could have used a variety of methods such as narrative for collecting data for triangulation. This could add more to the reliability and validity of the study.

6.4 Recommendations

It is evident from the study that support from different sources such as parents, teachers, peers and the community plays a major role in building academic resilience in learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families. Therefore their collaborative effort as a team is recommended for its effectiveness in building academic resilience in learners who are at risk of failure due to poverty. The school in particular is a place which could enhance academic resilience. Teachers could help learners from poverty stricken families by providing support and pastoral care. This is evident from the study that teachers' support plays a vital role in building academic resilience in learners at risk due to poverty. The finding shows that learners consider school as their vital place that could change their status-quo. Therefore teachers should help learners to improve their self-esteem as the study shows that learners who are academic resilient also have positive self-esteem.

Moreover, the study shows that teachers' positive attitude towards learners make them feel important and belonging. It is therefore crucial for teachers to treat learners with dignity as to encourage them to feel worthy. By so doing learners could feel loved and as a result their

resilience could be improved. It is revealed by the findings from this study that learners who are respected by their teachers do well academically despite their adversities. This is supported by the findings from the study conducted by Moloji *et al.* (2010) that learners who are respected by their teachers succeed academically.

The asset-based approach by Ebersöhn and Eloff (2006) indicates that working as a team enables the community to use available resources effectively even if they are insufficient. Therefore it is encouraged that the school, parents and the community could work collaboratively for better results. The school is taken to be the most influential place where children are not learning curriculum only but also learning even different behaviours (Alvy, 2008). Therefore if teachers as their role models could work hand in hand with other stakeholders for the betterment of all children in schools that would influence the learners to do the same to their peers. So the community at large may be positively influenced. Therefore teachers as the agents of change are encouraged to influence their workplace positively.

Moreover, teachers are encouraged to teach learners life skills so that they could acquire skills that could be used daily in their lives, skills such as decision-making, problem-solving, creativeness, empathy and others. These will help learners to face their challenges without any fear.

Additionally, teachers should teach learners to use available resources. It is evident from the study that participants used available resources within themselves as well as those around them. For example, they used the skills that they have acquired such as decision-making to decide what they need in their lives. They also used problem-solving skills when they borrowed pens from their teachers and class-mates. This is supported by the asset-based approach that people should use resources which are available effectively (Ebersöhn and Eloff, 2006).

Moreover, in the Lesotho context, primary schools are requested to have fund raising because of fee abolition, therefore schools could raise more funds as to help learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families with small items like soap and shoe-polish.

Furthermore, the Lesotho Government should also contribute funds for the needy as the World Vision and The Red Cross (non-governmental organisations in Lesotho) contribute by helping the needy with basic needs such as uniforms and food. For example, the government could buy uniform and give grants for such learners. This will improve the daily attendance of learners as

well as their academic resilience. The findings from the study reveal that sometimes learners do not go to school because of dirty uniform due to lack of soap.

6.5 Final remark

For further research on factors promoting academic resilience, the researcher suggests that teachers, parents and the community could be contacted to gather information from different sources. The researcher also suggests a variety of research methods of collecting data such as narrative to be used for further research. That will add to a further understanding of the phenomenon studied. Such studies would help us, as teachers, to better understand how we can support development of resilience in children such that the effects of socio-economic factors do not negatively affect their life chances.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Interview questions

1. What problems do you encounter at home?
2. What problems do you encounter at school?
3. What are the reasons for the success you have in your school work?

Appendix B

Observation schedule (during interviews)

Body language

Facial expression

Appendix C

Letter to participant with consent form (Katleho is a pseudonym)

University of KwaZulu-Natal

P/Bag X03

Ashwood 3605

6 th August 2012

Grade 6 learner

Katleho Primary School

Quthing 700

Dear Student

Re: A request for participating in the study

I would like you to participate in the study that I will conduct in your school. The study is about factors that promote academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged learners. I would like to get information from you on factors that contribute to your academic success. To gather this information, I would like to conduct four personal interviews in two consecutive weeks if agreed upon and last for about twenty-five to thirty minutes each. A tape-recorder will be used to record the conversation through your permission.

Your responses will be kept in a safe locked place and your name will not be used instead I will use pseudonyms as a result your responses will not be identified. Your participation is voluntarily so you have a right to participate only if you feel like doing so. Again, you are free to withdraw at any time from the study without being discriminated and your rights should be respected.

The interviews will not intervene with your studies. Your participation would not influence your studies as there are no marks that can be collected from participation. Again there are no good or wrong answers from the interviews.

The tape recorded used for the interviews will be kept safely at the University of KwaZulu- Natal for five years and be destroyed thereafter.

Please sign the consent form attached if you agree to participate in the study provided you are given permission at home.

For any further information concerning this matter, you may contact me at 0762107897 and e-mail address 203506661@stu.ukzn.ac.za. My supervisor, Dr Ntombela could also be contacted if needed. Her contact details are as follows: 0312601342 and e-mail address Ntombelas1@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully

‘Matlholiso ‘Mopa

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I..... (Name of participant in full) agree to participate in the study conducted by Mrs.'Matlholiso 'Mopa in her study namely: *An exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners.*' I understand that the study is voluntarily and I am free to withdraw from the study at any time I feel like doing so. Again, I understand that anonymity and confidentiality will be practised in the study therefore I will not be identified. I also understand that the study will not intervene with my studies.

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix D

Letter to parent/ guardian/ caretaker requesting consent for children's participation

University of KwaZulu-Natal

P/Bag X03

Ashwood 3605

6 th August 2012

Parent/Guardian/ Caretaker

Katleho Primary School

Quthing 700

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: A request for permission to interview a learner in the study

I would like to conduct the study namely: *'An exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners'* using your child for information. This is done for the requirements towards my degree of Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I will conduct four personal interviews with each learner to get information on factors that contribute to their academic achievement. The findings could be used by the teachers, learners, school, parents/ guardians/ caretakers and the community at large for improvement.

The interviews will not affect their learning as we will schedule the time that is relevant. Again, the study will not influence their learning because there are no good or wrong answers and it does not have any relationship with their classroom work. Moreover the child has a right to withdraw at any time s/he feels like doing so as participation is voluntarily.

I would like you to sign the consent form attached if you give me permission to interview your child. For any further clarification on this matter you may contact me at 0762107897, e-mail address: 203506661@stu.ukzn.ac.za. My supervisor, Dr. Ntombela could also be contacted when needed. Her contact number is 0312601342 and her e-mail address: Ntombelas1@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully

Matlholiso Mopa

PARENT/GUARDIAN/ CARETAKER CONSENT FORM

I..... (Name of parent/guardian/caretaker give Mrs 'Matlholiso 'Mopa permission to interview (Name of child in full) for her study namely: '*An exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners*'. I understand that participation is voluntarily therefore I am free to withdraw the child at any time I feel like doing so without being discriminated. I also understand that the study will not intervene with the child's studies.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN/CARETAKER

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix E

Letter to grade six class-teacher

University of KwaZulu- Natal

P/Bag XO3

Ashwood

3605

6 th August 2012

Grade six class teacher

Katleho Primary School

Quthing 700

Dear Sir/ Madam

Re: A request for students' participation in a study

I would like to ask for permission to conduct a study namely: *'An exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners'* using your learners. I would like to interview your grade six learners who succeed academically regardless their difficulties. The study is done to fulfil the requirements towards the degree of Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. However the findings can be used to improve the school as a whole.

Participation is voluntarily so the participants are free to withdraw at any time they wish to do so. Data will be collected by means of personal interviews which will be held four times for each participant lasting for about twenty five to thirty minutes twice a week in two consecutive weeks out of their study time.

I would like you to sign the consent form attached had you granted me permission to do so. For any clarification concerning this matter, you may contact me at my cell number: 0762107897 and e-mail address: 203506661@stu.ukzn.ac.za. Dr Ntombela who is my supervisor, could also be contacted whenever necessary. Her contact telephone number is 0312601342 and e-mail address; Ntombelas1@ukzn.ac.za

Yours faithfully

‘Matlholiso ‘Mopa

TEACHER’S CONSENT FORM

I..... (Teacher’s name in full) have given ’Matlholiso ’Mopa consent to conduct her study namely: ‘*An exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners*’ using the learners in my class. I understand that the research will not intervene with teaching and learning process. I also understand that learners’ participation is voluntarily therefore the participants are free to withdraw at any time they feel like doing so.

SIGNATURE OF THE CLASSTEACHER

DATE

Appendix F

Letter to the principal

University of KwaZulu- Natal

P/Bag XO3

Ashwood, 3605

27 th August 2012

The Principal

Katleho Primary School

Quthing 700

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: A request for conducting a study

I would like to conduct a study namely: *'An exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners'* in your school. I would like to interview your grade six learners who succeed academically despite their adversity. Each learner will be interviewed twice a week in two successive weeks' time. The study is conducted for the requirements towards my degree of Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. However, the findings may benefit learners, teachers, the school and the community at large.

The study is voluntarily so you are free to decide whether your school would participate. You are also free to withdraw at any time you feel like doing so without being prejudiced. The data collected will remain anonymity and confidential. Again, the study will not intervene with the learners' studies as interviews will be conducted out of teaching and learning activities.

For any further clarification, contact me at this cell number: 0762107897 and my e-mail address is 203506661@stu.ukzn.co.za. Dr. Ntombela, who is my supervisor, could also be contacted when needed. Her contact number is: 0312601342 at working hours and her e-mail address is Ntombelas1@ukzn.ac.za.

Please sign the attached consent form would you grant me permission to conduct the study in your school.

Hoping that my request will be considered

Yours faithfully

'Matlholiso'Mopa

PRINCIPAL’S CONSENT FORM

I..... (Name of principal in full) declare that it is out of my permission that 'Matlholiso 'Mopa would conduct her study namely: *‘An exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners ’* in my school.

I understand the nature of the research that my learners are not bound to the study as a result they may withdraw at any time they wish without being prejudiced. I also understand that the study will not intervene with their studies. Furthermore anonymity and confidentiality will be applied to secure the participants.

SIGNATURE OF THE PRINCIPAL

DATE

Appendix G

Letter to Senior Education Officer

University of KwaZulu-Natal

P/Bag X03

Ashwood 3605

27 th August 2012

The Senior Education Officer

P.O. Box 43

Quthing 700

Dear Sir

Re: A request for conducting a study in Katlehong Primary School

This is a request for conducting a study namely: *'An exploration of factors promoting resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners* at Katleho Primary School. This is done to fulfil the requirements towards the degree of Master of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. However, the copy of the findings may be received for the benefit of stake holders like The Department of Education, teachers, parents and the school governing body.

The interviews will be with grade six learners from socio-economically disadvantaged families who show resilience in their studies as a result they achieve academically from the average performance of 50% and above. The participants will be interviewed twice a week in two consecutive weeks and they will be scheduled in such a way that they do not intervene with their studies. Furthermore, measures will be taken for anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher will use pseudonyms instead of real names. The study is voluntarily so the participants have a right to withdraw at any time they wish to do so without being prejudiced.

I may be contacted at 0762107897, e-mail address: 203506661@stu.ukzn.ac.za for further explanation concerning the study. Dr. Ntombela, who is my supervisor, may also be contacted when needed at 0312601342 and her e-mail address is Ntombelas1@ukzn.ac.za

May you please sign the attached consent form had I given that opportunity.

Yours faithfully

'Matlholiso'Mopa

SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER CONSENT FORM

I..... (Name of Senior Education Officer in full) declare that I have given Mrs.'Matlholiso 'Mopa permission to conduct her study namely: *'An exploration of factors promoting resilience in socio-economically disadvantaged grade six learners'* in Katleho Primary School. I understand that the study will not intervene with participants' studies and they are free to withdraw from the study at any time they wish to do so without being discriminated as participation is voluntarily.

SIGNATURE OF SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix H: Ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal



16 November 2012

Mrs Emely 'Matlholiso' Mopa 203506661
School of Educational Psychology
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Mopa

Protocol Reference Number: HSS/0819/012M

Project Title: Exploration of factors promoting academic resilience in socio-economic disadvantaged learners in Grade Six.

Expedited approval

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval following your response to queries raised by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocols faithfully

Yours Faithfully

.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

cc Supervisor Dr Rosemary Kalenga
cc Academic leader Dr D Davids
cc school Admin. Mrs S Naicker

Professor S Collings (Chair)
Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa
Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za
Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

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