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Community Care Workers' role in supporting academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts

by

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DECLARATION

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I Ngwanakgohu Elsie Maimela (student number 19228784), declare that the mini dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by my for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

November 2020

ETHICAL CLEARENCE CERTIFICATE

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- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
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- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

DEDICATIONS

I dedicate this research to my late mother, Plantina Ramporwane Moraba-Matjomane, affectionately known as Hunadi, who instilled in me the culture of studying. After being forced to leave school to go work to help her mother support her siblings as the eldest daughter, her desire was for her children to embrace education. I wanted to fulfil my mother's dream, I therefore kept on studying even under unfavourable conditions such as a lack of funds. I could have given up, but my mother's wish kept me going.

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I thank God for opening an opportunity for me at UP to pursue my studies as an educational psychologist. Matthew 19:26b “Nothing is impossible with God”. It is by His grace that He made this possible even sustaining me during challenging times.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate, explore and understand the role that Community Care Workers (CCWs) play in supporting the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts. An interpretive stance was employed to gain a better understanding of the perceptions and experiences of CCWs. Qualitative methodology was used to obtain the personal accounts of CCWs in answering the research question and the sub questions. Both purposive and convenient sampling methods were used to select the participants. The sample consisted of nine CCWs, two auxiliary social workers, and one centre coordinator. A case study design and focus group discussions were used to further understand the CCWs' personal experiences.

The twelve participants took part in two focus group discussions; inductive thematic analysis was utilised to identify the themes that emerged from the data gathered from these discussions. Two themes emerged from the data analysis, namely: factors hindering academic resilience and factors fostering academic resilience. These themes and sub-themes highlight the risks hindering academic resilience and the role that CCWs play to foster academic resilience. The risk factors were highlighted as detrimental to learners' academic resilience, however, CCWs play a vital role in mitigating the effects thereof.

Ungar's Social Ecology of Resilience Theory (2011) served as the theoretical base for the study. According to this framework, resilience happens when there are multiple adversities, the focus being on what the physical and social ecologies offer to counteract the adversities and promote resilience and growth. Based on the findings, learners were found to be facing multiple adversities threatening their academic resilience, as identified by the participating CCWs. It must be noted, however, that some learners succeed through the support of CCWs, while others do not.

Key words: Academic resilience; Community care workers; Low socio-economic status; Risk factors; Protective factors.

LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Exclamation Translations

To whom it may concern

The dissertation entitled, "Community Care Workers' role in supporting academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts" has been edited and proofread as of 27 October 2020.

As a language practitioner, I have a Basic degree in Languages, an Honours degree in French and a Master's degree in Assessment and Quality Assurance. I have been translating, editing, proofreading and technically formatting documents for the past 10 years. Furthermore, I am a member of the South African Translators' Institute (SATI) and the Professional Editors' Guild (PEG).

Please take note that Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for any content changes made to the document after the issuing of this certificate. Furthermore, Exclamation Translations takes no responsibility for the reversal or rejection of the changes made to this document.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APA	American Psychological Association
CCW	Community Care Workers
DSD	The Department of Social Development
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
SES	Socio Economic Status
WHO	World Health Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

1.1 INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

Learners from low socio-economic backgrounds in South Africa are faced with numerous adversities, including being orphaned, and thus they lack the support to develop academic resilience. Martin (2002) defines academic resilience as the force that pushes learners to not only attain the best academic scores, but also to have the potential to deal with academic stressors, for instance, not making it in school, dealing with workloads, and overcoming any adverse situations at school. South Africa is a country plagued by many challenges (Bruwer, Govender, Williams, Stein & Seedat, 2014). Among those challenges are the death of learners' parents, family violence, physical illness, and lack a of finances (Bruwer *et al.*, 2014). All of these factors may negatively impact learners' academic resilience. The World Health Organization (WHO) (2004) also states that for normal growth to take place in children, caregivers should be able to respond correctly to children's physical needs. Moreover, caring engagement can promote the healthy development of vulnerable children, and thus maximises their ability to withstand stressors and develop resilience (World Health Organization, 2004). Furthermore, Shole (2017) maintains that most children in South Africa are brought up by their grandparents for several reasons, including HIV/AIDS.

According to a survey released by The Health Science Research Council on the 5th of July 2018 in South Africa, 600 South Africans are infected with HIV Aids Virus daily. The United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reports 110 000 (88 000-140 000) Aids related deaths per year in South Africa. The statistics further suggest that 45% of all the deaths in the country could be attributed to HIV Aids, while 600,000 children are orphaned due to the pandemic (www.thesouthafrican.com). Most learners' economic status might drop as a result of being orphaned, which consequently results in adverse outcomes such as psychological, physical, and sexual issues which might affect learners academically. Moreover, children end up being stressed and are increasingly at risk for suicide ideation (Bruwer *et al.*, 2014). Klasen and Woolard (2009) have also established that South Africa currently has the highest unemployment rate in the world. Unemployment is another contributing factor to low

socio-economic status, which affects learners' total wellbeing, diminishing academic resilience (Klasen & Woolard, 2009). Socioemotional, physical, and academic support is therefore necessary to help learners develop academic resilience.

According to Herber and Johnston (2013), Community Care Workers (CCWs) form part of the multidisciplinary team that provide care to people who need physical, social, psychological, spiritual, and financial support. Herber and Johnston (2013) highlight the following as the roles played by CCWs presently: addressing clients' personal care needs, such as cleaning for them and bathing them; giving them social and psychological support, i.e. by listening and talking; and providing domestic support (doing house chores) for them. The CCWs in this study are those who provide social, psychological/emotional, and academic support to vulnerable learners and their families (Islam, Nadkarni, Zahn, Skillman, Kwon & Trinh-Shevrin, 2015). Herber and Johnston (2013) stipulate that despite the great contribution that CCWs are making, there seems to be little research on their role, thus more research needs to be done to shed light on their role.

The role of CCWs in the context of this study encompasses giving learners psychological, social, and academic support, thus helping them to develop emotional stability and academic resilience. Support may include helping learners with their homework, assignments, and providing effective study methods, amongst other things. Since they form part of a multidisciplinary team, CCWs may also refer learners who need expert services to the relevant professionals such as nurses, doctors, counsellors, psychologists, and other specialists. It can thus be said that CCWs' caring interrelationship may foster a trusting and secure environment for the promotion of academic resilience and total wellbeing.

1.2 THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study forms part of a longitudinal project that was initiated in 2010 titled "Building resilience in families: The role of community care workers in mitigating family risk factors". The rationale for the current study arose from my personal experiences - firstly as a person who was brought up in low Socio-Economic Status (SES) environment where I had to deal with numerous adversities daily; and secondly,

working as a teacher for 18 years in different township schools around Ekurhuleni in Gauteng where most of the learners were from low SES households.

Most learners in these schools were either raised by their unemployed parents, or by grandmothers living on government grants as they were orphaned by HIV and Aids. Most of the learners ended up dropping out of school. It is evident that learners from low SES households deal with adverse situations daily. It is for this reason that I took interest in this study, and set out to investigate, explore and describe the role that CCWs can play to support learners from low socio-economic contexts to develop academic resilience. This study aimed to inform the relevant stakeholders on intervention strategies and programmes that can be used by CCWs to help learners navigate their way towards the available resources with the goal of building academic resilience. It also aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge in research concerning the contributions of CCWs towards learners' academic resilience.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Support is vital for the development of every individual's total wellbeing (WHO, 2004). According to Ebersöhn (2016), South Africa is characterised by several structural disparities, which include, among others, unequal opportunities that are evident in homes, schools, and communities. Moreover, most households are dealing with issues such as limited job opportunities for the less educated, inter-generational poverty, and orphanhood, which all affect the livelihood of these families, and thus negatively impact children. These disparities have detrimental effects on all learners, especially those from low socio-economic contexts (Ebersöhn, 2016). The study aimed to investigate and understand the contribution that CCWs make in enhancing the academic resilience of leaners while helping them to achieve academic excellence, despite all of the stressors with which they are faced (Ungar, 2008). Very little is said about CCWs supporting learners academically, thus this study sheds more light on how CCWs can create a caring environment that fosters academic resilience.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate, explore and describe how community care workers can support the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic status backgrounds. According to the WHO (2004), good interpersonal relationships foster the wellbeing of children. Klasen and Woolard (2009) state that due to absent parents, parents' level of education, and financial challenges, learners from low SES households lack support; CCWs' support is therefore necessary. It is evident that learners from low socio-economic status households need physical, social, psychological (emotional) and financial support to help develop resilience against different adversities, and must also thus attain academic resilience (Maswikiti, 2005). This study aimed to inform CCWs' intervention on providing relevant support that can enhance learners' academic resilience. This was done in two ways: firstly, by exploring and understanding what CCWs perceive as the adversities faced by learners from low SES backgrounds. Secondly, this study looked at what contributions can be made to help learners withstand those adverse conditions and overcome them.

1.5 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

This study aimed to investigate and explore the role that can be played by CCWs to help learners develop academic resilience despite being orphaned, affected by or infected with HIV/AIDS, being raised by grandmothers surviving on a government grant, and a lack of financial support, among others. Therefore, the main research question is:

How can CCWs support the academic resilience of learners from a low SES context?

1.5.1 Sub-questions

The following research sub-questions elaborate on the main research question:

What forms of support can improve learners' academic resilience?

What are CCWs' perceptions of the academic adversities faced by learners from low SES backgrounds?

1.6 WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

According to the literature, CCWs provide a caring service to the community. I believe that with proper guiding programmes, they can contribute immensely to helping learners from low socio-economic contexts to thrive academically. The following working assumptions can be found in this research:

- Learners from low SES households encounter many adversities that can affect their academic resilience and they thus will require additional support.
- CCWs provide essential support services to families experiencing adversity in their community.
- Learners from low SES households can develop academic resilience to withstand adversities with the proper support.

1.7 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.7.1 Resilience

Resilience is defined as an individual's ability to endure catastrophic conditions and stress and continue with life (Keye & Pidgeon, 2013). According to Ungar (2011), it is the capability of individuals to navigate and negotiate their way to physical, psychological, social and cultural resources to develop total wellbeing. Theron, Liebenberg, and Malindi (2014, p. 258) define resilience as the "process of adjusting well to significantly challenging circumstances". Resilient learners are expected to use the experiences gained as a defence mechanism when dealing with similar situations. Resilience in this study refers to having the zeal to pursue one's dreams and succeed despite facing challenges.

1.7.2 Academic resilience

Academic resilience encompasses learners' motivation or the desire to learn despite all adversities and being persistent until the desired results are achieved (Martin, 2002). Academic resilience in this study refers to having the ability to cope with scholastic demands, such as homework, classwork, examinations, learning good

study skills, being able to adjust and adapt despite unfavourable school (e.g. bullying), and home conditions (e.g. absent parents, busy parents, and a lack of psychological/emotional and material support).

1.7.3 Low socio-economic status

Low socio-economic status is one of the adverse conditions that learners grapple with (Johnson *et al.*, 2016). Socio-economic status is defined as an individual's educational, social, and economic standing (APA, 2014). It also refers to an individual's access to the necessities of life (OECD, 2018). Low SES households in this study refer to absent parents, busy parents, a lack of psychological/emotional and material support (school uniform and food). This study looked at the learners' ability to defy a lack of necessities and thrive academically with the support of CCWs.

1.7.4 Community Care Workers (CCWs)

CCWs are people who work with vulnerable societies to provide the caring service needed (Islam *et al.*, 2015). The literature consulted stipulates that it is possible to thrive in the midst of adversities with the necessary support. CCWs refer to people who provide primary care services to people in need (World Health Organization, 2004). CCWs in this study refer to people who provide caring engagement and academic support to learners from low SES households to instil a hunger for academic excellence.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Table 1.1 below shows the methodological overview of the process followed during data collection.

Table 1.1 Overview of the research methodology and process

RESEARCH APPROACH	
Methodological paradigm.	Qualitative approach.
Meta-theoretical paradigm.	Interpretivism.

RESEARCH DESIGN	
Case study design.	Single case study.
RESEARCH CONTEXT	
• Research side; • Participants; • Rapport building; • Researcher; • Focus group discussions; • Member checking; and • Observation.	Matimba-Sinqobile drop-in centre. 12 Community Care Workers from 4 satellites. Introduction by researcher & CCWs. As a moderator. First discussion with 12 members. Second discussion with six members – member checking. Field notes.
SAMPLING	
• Purposive; and • Convenient.	
DATA COLLECTION METHODS	**DATA CAPTURING METHODS**
• Focus group discussion; and • Observation.	Audio-recording. Field notes.
DATA ANALYSIS	
Thematic analysis.	

The focus of this study was to explore CCWs' viewpoints (voices), a qualitative approach was therefore employed. This was done in order to obtain the participants' lived experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2016). Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano and Morales (2007) consider qualitative research as a vehicle that allows researchers to gather rich information regarding people and their perspective of social truth. The qualitative approach proposes a

multiverse reality; thus, the participants' active participation was key in getting rich information to answer the research questions (Creswell *et al.*, 2007). The aim of using a qualitative approach was to investigate and uncover the meaning as pinpointed and narrated by the participating CCWs (Hesse-Biber, 2016).

1.8.1 Interpretivist paradigm

This study was approached from an interpretivist stance as its aim was to understand CCWs' perspectives of the adversities faced by learners from low SES backgrounds and how they help them cope. According to Creswell *et al.* (2007), the interpretivist paradigm emphasises multiple realities rather than a universal reality. The interpretive paradigm allowed me to understand the multiple realities of CCWs by listening to and observing them in a real setting. It gave a broader spectrum of what the CCWs' perceived as the challenges faced by learners from low SES backgrounds, as well as the impact of their helping service. The CCWs were further probed to give a personal account of their helping experiences and the meanings attached to those experiences. Interpretivist paradigm considers how the experience of one participant contributes towards what is common or different from that which is experienced by others in the same setting (Andrade, 2009). This study was carried out to explore, understand and describe the shared realities of CCWs' from their perspective regarding their supportive role in promoting the academic resilience of primary school learners from low socio-economic contexts, especially regarding similarities and differences.

1.8.2 Case study design

This study employed a case study design, which refers to a factual inquiry about a current phenomenon (case) set within a real-world context (Yin, 2009). This study gathered factual information from CCWs concerning their helping engagement at the Matimba/Sinqobile drop-in centre, which is considered a natural context. The research was done as a collaboration between the researcher (myself) and the participants (CCWs). The trustworthiness of this study was obtained from information gathered through fieldwork, verbal accounts, and observations that were done during the research (Mtsweni, 2017). I listened to CCWs' perspectives individually and in a group to get rich meaning regarding their helping engagement. This was done by applying

active participation, observation, and taking notes (of the individual and group sessions) (Thomas, 2010). Yin (2003) defines a single case study as research that studies one single participant or a single group of participants. A single case study design was used to study, investigate, and explore the lived experiences of a single group of participants (CCWs).

1.8.3 Sampling

I worked on the existing project at the Matimba/Sinqobile Drop-in Centre, which is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO). The centre is based in the Mamelodi township and has four satellites with Matimba/Sinqobile being the main satellite. The other three satellites are stationed at three primary schools. The four centres service 163 learners who are either infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, although the numbers usually fluctuate. Matimba/Sinqobile serves high school learners only as primary school learners are catered to at their respective schools. The learners discussed in this study came from 99 families as during the intake, CCWs prioritise those who are from more needy families. The sample in this study was composed of 12 CCWs from the four satellites, two of the CCWs are social auxiliary workers as they are not employed as social worker at the centre. I combined both convenient and purposive sampling as the CCWs were accessible and willing to participate, while alternatively, they were selected for a specific purpose. Twelve CCWs were selected purposefully with a specific purpose in mind (Maree, 2016) as purposive sampling involves well-informed participants. The participants were working with learners on a daily basis and could therefore offer rich insight into the role that they play on a daily basis to support learners' academic resilience. Furthermore, these CCWs were targeted due to their availability, accessibility, and their willingness to participate as access had already been negotiated (Etikan *et al.*, 2016), this selection is known as convenience sampling.

1.8.4 Data collection and documentation

I used focused group discussions to collect information. According to Maree (2016), a focus group discussion differs from a semi-structured interview in the sense that it involves a discussion on a particular topic or the research question, and conflicts are encouraged in the debate as they assist in data capturing. Guided interaction and

discussion were used to generate the details of rich emotions, experiences and the reasoning behind the individuals' actions, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes. The discussions and interactions were guided by questions that addressed the research question, sub-questions, as well as the follow up questions, as suggested by Harrell and Bradley (2009). Maree (2016) emphasises involving some of the group members when capturing the information as this helps researchers to get rich meaning. I made observational notes of the observed behaviour because it is vital as focus groups involve both verbal and non-verbal data. The focus group interactions, the recordings, observation notes and involving other members of the group were used as a point of reference when writing the transcripts; which provided rich data. The chosen data collection and capturing techniques were relevant to this study as they allowed the CCWs to raise their viewpoints on how they support the academic resilience of learners (both primary and secondary) from low SES households.

1.8.5 Thematic data analysis

Maree (2013) describes thematic analysis as the process through which the researcher identifies patterns and themes regarding how people live and behave based on their accounts. Inductive data analysis was employed, scrutinising all forms of data collected during the research process. Thematic analysis has six steps according to Javadi and Zarea (2016); these stages are: getting familiar with the data; creating inductive codes from the raw material; searching for themes; reviewing these themes; defining and naming the themes; and producing a report. I used thematic analysis as it was deemed to be relevant to this study.

Figure 1.1 below shows the schematic representation of the qualitative (thematic) data analysis process according to Creswell.

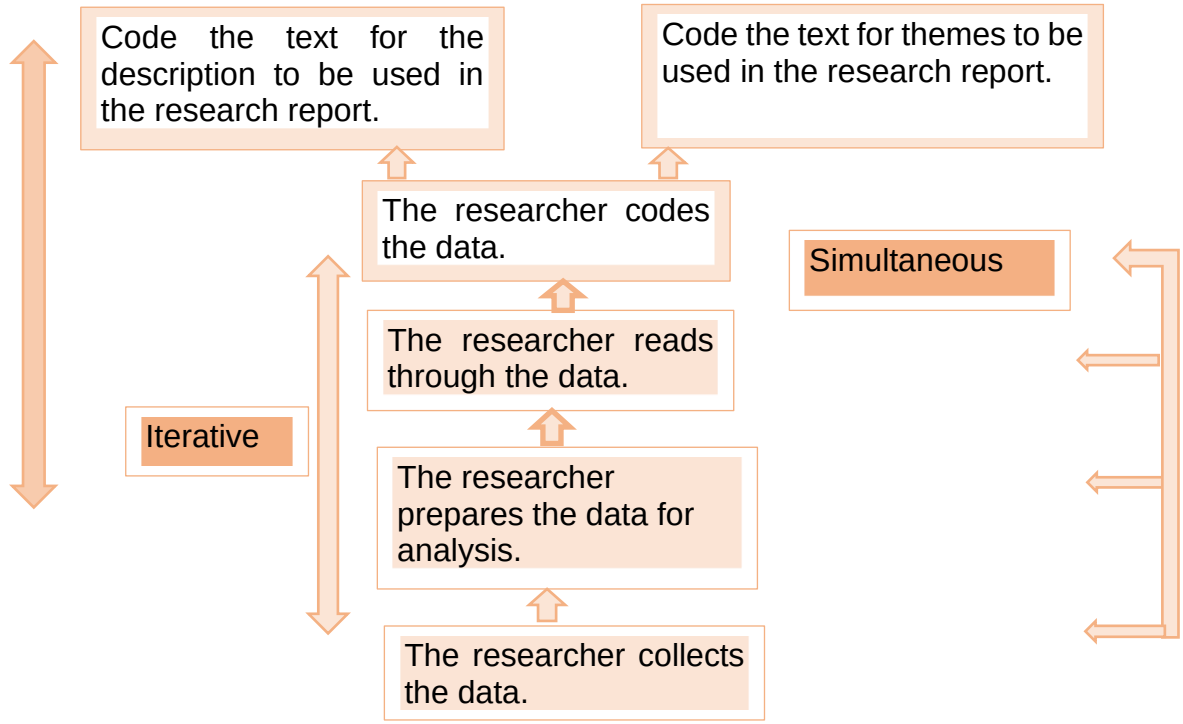

Figure 1.1: The Qualitative process of data analysis (Adapted from Creswell, 2012) by Mahlangu (2016, p.14)

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria to conduct the study. The following ethical principles formed part of ethical clearance process.

1.9.1 Informed consent

Informed consent refers to the participants' agreement to willingly take part in the research project and provide the researcher with accurate information (Kinkorová, 2016). According to Kinkorová (2016), researchers need informed consent when doing research on, and gathering information about people. I informed the participants that the participation was voluntary, and there was therefore no incentive for participating. I then requested them to sign consent forms to indicate that they were giving me permission to work with them (see Appendix A). Aurelius (2008) states that informing participants of the purpose of a study and allowing them to check/verify information make them feel at ease, and fosters trust.

1.9.2 Confidentiality

To ensure confidentiality, participants' information was made anonymous, none of their names were recorded on the transcribed data (Aurelius, 2008) . It is my responsibility as the researcher to avoid intrusion in the participants' personal affairs (Flewitt, 2005). The participants have ownership over their information and have the right to privacy and human dignity (Kinkorová, 2016). I have therefore kept their information secure and confidential, as required by the ethical rules that govern research (Kinkorová, 2016). I included member validation/member checking in this study to avoid a breach of confidentiality and to ensure that the data captured was valid (Flewitt, 2005).

1.9.3 Autonomy

I informed the participants of their right and independence to participate and withdraw at any time without penalty if they wanted to from the onset of the research as that is their human right (Orbs, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000). Participants' right of voluntarily take part in the study as autonomous persons was honoured by signing the consent form (Orbs, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000).

1.9.4 No harm

The study protected participants from psychological harm by respecting their right to privacy (Shole, 2017). In other words, I protected the participants from any harm by keeping their information anonymous (Flewitt, 2005).

1.10 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This mini dissertation is structured into five chapters.

Chapter 1 deals with the following aspects of the study: introduction and rationale of the study, the purpose, problem statement, research question, assumptions, concept clarification, initial literature review, research methodology and the ethical considerations.

Chapter 2 deals with a review of the literature concerning resilience, academic resilience, socio-economic status/contexts, and related factors (risks and protective factors) and community care workers. The chapter also discusses the theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter 3 deals with the methodology, focusing on the paradigm, research design, data collection, documentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data.

Chapter 4 deals with the results/ findings and their interpretation. The chapter includes raw data from the research site and the interpretation thereof in thematic form.

Chapter 5 is the final chapter with recommendations for future research. It further answers the research questions, addresses the assumptions and limitations of the study, as well as the contributions of this study towards this field of research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of this chapter is to explore and investigate the literature on low socio-economic status and how it impacts academic resilience. Consequently, the aim was to identify the risk and protective factors relating to resilience, as well as the role that CCWs play in supporting learners' academic resilience. Furthermore, the chapter aims to explore, investigate, and identify any gaps in the existing literature concerning supporting learners' academic resilience.

According to Ungar (2011, 2015), resilient people can navigate and negotiate their way towards physical, psychological, social, and cultural resources, and therefore adapt amidst stressors. A high adaptability level is accounted for by the biological, emotional, relational, and sociocultural factors of the individual (Ungar, 2015). Mampane (2014), alternatively, finds that resilient learners describe themselves as being determined, education/achievement-orientated, focused, having a high internal locus of control, and being able to identify and navigate towards all available resources at their disposal. Consequently, resilient learners, unlike their counterpart, can identify and use the available resources to attain optimal development (Mampane, 2014). Resilience is therefore centred in the following aspects: the individual's capability to navigate their way towards the necessary resources that support well-being; the capacity of the physical and social ecology of the individual to provide resources; and the individual, family and community's capacity to negotiate the cultural meanings of sharing resources in a meaningful way (Ungar, 2008). More emphasis is, however, placed on how individuals navigate their way towards available resources for the development and sustainability of well-being (Ungar, 2011b). In light of this, Ungar (2011b) states that these resources should be both accessible and available.

Moreover, Ungar (2012) indicates that despite the overwhelming research suggesting that the majority of children are raised under stressful conditions, many of them have been found to survive and forge decent lives. Children's resilience, however, depends on them utilising resources at their disposal to help them withstand their stressful

conditions (Ungar, 2012). Hence, Ungar (2012) states that one must find a new normal in the midst of adversity as it is not always possible to simply bounce back to the old norm.

For the purpose of this study, I will use Ungar's definition of resilience. According to Ungar (2011), resilience encompasses individuals' capability to navigate and negotiate their way to physical, psychological, social, and cultural resources to develop total wellbeing. Furthermore, resilience in this study refers to having the zeal to pursue one's dreams and succeed despite facing challenges.

2.2 DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON RESILIENCE

Masten and Wright (2010) define resilience as the ability to adapt positively under difficult circumstances – although, the adaptation would have to be both culture-bound and context-bound. Research has identified intelligence, self-regulation, meaning making, emotional intelligence, and positive adjustment as universal key processes of resilience. Researchers agree that these processes should be looked at uniquely within a specific cultural context (Theron & Theron, 2013). Walsh (2012), alternatively, sees resilience as individuals' capacity to withstand and bounce back from life's difficulties/adverse conditions. In their international resilience project involving fourteen communities and eleven countries, Cameron, Ungar and Liebenberg (2007) identified seven tensions that individuals need to conquer simultaneously to be resilient. Accordingly, these are the seven tensions that emerged from the respective cultural groups (Cameron *et al.*, 2007):

- **Access to material resources**: the availability of resources to cater to individuals' needs at all levels, as indicated in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - physiological needs (food, shelter, clothing and water), safety needs (personal security, health and property), love and belonging (friendships, intimacy, family and sense of connection), esteem (respect, recognition, strength and freedom) and self-actualisation (the desire to become that one can be). Caregivers are not always able to cater to all these needs and therefore the needs become complex.

- **Relationships**: the individuals' ability to engage in the relationships that they have with their friends, family, peers, teachers, mentors, community members, as well as enemies to form networks to negotiate the necessary and available resources.
- **Identity**: individuals' ability to negotiate the highs and lows of relationships and remain themselves instead of losing their identity (self) in the process.
- **Cohesion**: the ability to balance the responsibility to oneself (nurturing oneself) and the responsibility to nurture others.
- **Power and control**: the ability to control (exert power/authority) and be controlled (being submissive).
- **Cultural adherence**: adhering to ones' family, culture and norms while considering community and global norms and culture.
- **Social justice**: the ability to assert ones' rights and the rights of others.

Consequently, one needs to conquer these tensions to attain resilience, which also requires a joint effort within contexts (Cameron *et al.*, 2007).

The interactions among young people who were exposed to risky or stressful conditions were observed to see if they were able to conquer the tensions simultaneously (Cameron *et al.*, 2007). The outcome of the study shows that the children who were resilient were those who were able to negotiate relational resources that protected them from the adverse conditions (Cameron *et al.*, 2007).

Despite physical and social ecologies that can threaten individual wellbeing, as stated by Cameron above, according to Ungar (2013), there are five identified capitals (resources) that can buffer or act as protective factors against stressful conditions and can help individuals to bounce back, namely:

- **Social capital:** caring relationships with caregivers, feelings of security.
- **Human capital:** individual aptitude to learn, and the ability to take part in play and work.

- **Financial capital:** reliable health care facilities, and well-resourced schools with proper support systems.
- **Natural capital:** clean air, water, and access to land.
- **Built capital:** recreational facilities, as well as proper and safe streets and schools.

This study aimed to explore how CCWs help learners at Matimba/Sinqobile and its three satellites to use the five capitals (resources) identified by Ungar (2013) to conquer the seven tensions mentioned by Cameron *et al.* (2007) to attain academic resilience.

2.3 ACADEMIC RESILIENCE

Martin (2013) and Theron, Liebenberg and Malindi (2014) define academic resilience as learners' motivation to learn, as well as to adjust well to significantly challenging circumstances. Ungar (2012) suggests that resilient individuals can endure and defy unpleasant circumstances, challenges, and risk factors. Moreover, academically resilient learners succeed educationally/academically despite the challenges faced both at school and at home (Bryan, 2005). Additionally, Cohen, Slonim, Finzi and Leischtentritt (2002) see being resilient in any circumstances, including academically, as having the ability to perceive adverse conditions as challenges that can be dealt with, not hindrances. Therefore, academically resilient learners are those who view risk factors as challenges that can be conquered.

Anderson (1997) views resilience as being able to successfully deal with stressful conditions by learning how to adapt to remain competent. Resilient learners are therefore expected to be able to adapt, negotiate through situations, and remain competent. Moreover, competence is central to academic resilience (Pan & Chan, 2007) as resilient learners are expected to remain competent behaviourally, psychologically, and academically, even in the face of adversity.

Wolin and Wolin (1993) define academically resilient individuals as those with the ability to self-repair. Furthermore, Yeager and Dweck (2012, p. 303) explain that:

"Resilience is any behavioural, attributional, or emotional response to an academic or social challenge that is positive and beneficial for development (such as seeking new strategies, putting forth greater effort, or solving conflicts peacefully), and we refer to any response to a challenge that is negative or not beneficial for development (such as helplessness, giving up, cheating, or aggressive retaliation) as not resilient. Many factors can influence a person's resilience, including the environmental risks and assets that surround them".

Academically resilient learners are therefore those who respond positively by using psychological resources such as feelings of self-esteem, a sense of attachment, accessing health care, schooling, and opportunities to display their talents to others (Unger, 2008). Ungar (2008) highlights the importance of culture and what it informs: good parental support, access to good medical support and education, which might act as a buffer to the child who considers that to be important, while to another child that may have a different implication due to cultural difference.

2.4 Socio-Economic Status (SES)

Socio-Economic Status (SES) is conceptualised as an individual's occupation, level of education, and income of the family (APA, 2014). The socio-economic status of a family, in particular, the level of income, dictates the availability of the resources necessary to support the academic resilience of learners (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2018). Johnson *et al.* (2016) agree with the (OECD) and go further by adding that a conducive environment for learning fosters academic resilience. According to the OECD (2016; 2017), SES is regarded as one of the strongest determinants of total wellbeing and academic resilience. Children from low SES backgrounds lack financial support and access to educational resources to help them develop academic resilience (Maswikiti, 2005).

SES also refers to good interpersonal relations between parents and children, available parents and good social networks that cushion and bolster the emotional stability of children (OECD, 2018). SES is therefore seen as multifaceted as it incorporates many aspects, including a family's social standing and income level

(Altschul, 2012). Among the multifaceted aspects, SES also refers to challenges such as overcrowded space, poor living conditions, and a lack of primary resources (Schoon, 2006). Mamelodi is characterised by overcrowding and poor living conditions, with most people living in shacks that they have erected themselves. Many inhabitants are unemployed while living in absolute poverty (Shole, 2017). Shole (2017) describes Mamelodi as an overpopulated township with numerous informal settlements, poor schooling conditions, a lack of role models and a poor schooling context that is not conducive to learning. According to Mampane (2017), some families in Mamelodi depend on government grants as their sole source of income, which indicates poverty as the most adverse condition in South Africa. However, the effect of SES on academic resilience differs in accordance with a number of factors, such as the type of SES, i.e. education level; occupation; and family's financial standing (Altschul, 2012).

Cirino *et al.* (2002) state that during the 1960s and 1970s there was a change in the operational meaning of SES as initially only the fathers' education level was considered, but now the mother's education level and occupation are also considered as a family is seen as a unit. Sirin (2005) highlights the ambiguity in the meaning of SES as it incorporates different factors and its measurement varies according to context. Furthermore, parental education is seen as determining the family income, and thus its economic standing (Ainsworth, 2005). Research has included home resources such as access to computers, study room, books, and access to extra lessons/support as part of SES (Cirino *et al.*, 2002; Coleman, 1988).

2.5 RISK FACTORS

Risk factors are defined as factors that have a high chance of bringing negatively impacting individuals, families, community growth, and wellbeing (Jolliffe, Farrington, Loeber & Pardini, 2016). In light of this, Table 2.1 explores the risks that have a high probability of bringing about detrimental outcomes to learners' development of academic resilience.

Table 2.1: Examples of the risk factors hindering academic resilience at different levels of the system

SYSTEMS LEVELS	RISK FACTORS
Individual	• Involvement in delinquent acts. • Faced with multiple life stressors. • Poor response inhibition skills/self-regulation. • Involvement in substance use. • Low self-esteem.
Family	• Broken homes and change of caregivers. • Poverty due to low socio-economic status. • Low parental education. • Family transitions (change in parent figures). • Having a young mother. • Poor parental supervision (monitoring, control, and child management). • Low attachment to the child. • Abuse and neglect. • Delinquent siblings who drop out of school.
School	• Low achievement in elementary school. • Frequent truancy and absenteeism. • Low motivation and commitment towards school. • Poor school motivation, attitude, and failure. • Threatening school climate with labelling teachers. • Low academic aspirations. • Low parental college and university expectations for the child. • Low achievement for maths especially for boys.
Community	• Residing in a disadvantaged and disorganised neighbourhood. • Low neighbourhood attachment. • High crime neighbourhood. • Availability and perceived access to drugs. • Unsafe neighbourhood.
Peers	• Peer pressure from groups. • Associating with peers and relatives who participate in crime.

Additionally, inequality is one of the risk factors in the education system, this is evident as language, class and cultural differences are still regarded as hindrances (Cornwell, 2009). Little or no attention is paid to the role that language, class, and culture play in impacting learners' academic resilience negatively (Cornwell, 2009). Some teachers have accepted the gaps caused by these disparities as normal, hence they focus on bridging them and that exacerbates the situation as it blames individuals, families, the community, and culture regarding what is perceived as a weakness resting within them (Johnson, 2005).

Unfortunately, on the one hand, learners from low SES households are left behind as some teachers believe that there is no hope for them, while on the other hand, parents blame the school personnel for a lack of proper intervention strategies that are put in place to support learners' academic resilience (Atkinson & Juntunen, 1994). Learners are disadvantaged by these circumstances and are consequently labelled as lazy or incompetent, and the status quo is maintained (Herbert, 1999). It is evident that learners need extra support to help them withstand the injustices and discrimination that they face daily and to help them withstand the adverse conditions they experience in schools (Herbert, 1990). The school system seems to not be accommodative of learners from previously disadvantaged minorities as it either overrepresents or underrepresents gifted and less gifted children (Furgeson, Kuzleski & Smith, 2001).

According to Garmezy and Masten (1986), individual and social factors add to the risks that threatens progress and are associated with poor developmental outcomes. Furthermore, emotional detachment and the emotional absence of parents are considered as risk factors that are detrimental to academic resilience.

2.6 PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors are factors that predict the low probability of upsetting individuals' developmental wellbeing as well as that of families and communities while bolstering the desirable developmental wellbeing (Jolliffe, Farrington, Loeber & Pardini, 2016).

2.6.1 Interpersonal relationships and social support

Interpersonal relationships breed positive outcomes as they teach individuals to better understand themselves, others, the environment and how to relate to these (Martin, Marsh, McInerney & Green, 2009). Individuals learn how to conduct themselves in different contexts as they internalise different beliefs valued by family members, peers and the community (Martin, Marsh, McInerney & Green, 2009). These relationships serve as social support to learners and thus stabilise the stressful circumstances they find themselves in, serving as protective factors against the risks at hand (Malecki & Demarey, 2006).

Additionally, families, schools and communities form partnerships that are regarded as protective factors that foster learners' academic resilience (Bernard, 1995; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 2001). Bryan (2005, p. 220) defines family-school-community partnerships as:

> *"Collaborative initiatives or relationships among school personnel, parents, family members, community members, and representatives of community-based organizations, such as businesses, churches, libraries, and social service agencies"*

Partners work collaboratively to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of programmes aimed to increase learners' psychological, academic, and social characteristics to enhance academic resilience (Beveridge, 2013). Family-school-community partnerships have contributed immensely as protective factors towards helping learners, especially those from low SES contexts, to overcome their learning difficulties and the risks posed to their learning (Bryan, 2005). Bryan (2005, p. 220) lists the following four useful strategies that reduce risk factors and bolster protective factors to mediate academic resilience*:*

> *"Direct impact of risk factors on learners is reduced, the challenge of learners facing risky situation is reduced or modified, learners' self-esteem and efficacy is enhanced, learners are afforded opportunities to engage meaningfully with their environment."*

Family-school-community partnerships also grant learners opportunities to form meaningful bonds with experienced adults, and develop problem-solving and pro-social skills (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Bryan and Griffin (2010) view these collaborations as being aimed at building bridges and closing the gaps between school personnel and parents with hands-on engagements, such as helping them access resources that will enhance learning, home visits and workshops. Well thought out, successful democratic collaborations empower learners, parents, schools, and the community (Bryan & Henry, 2012). Although, family-school-community partnerships have been in existence for some time, in some communities, they seem to have been ineffective in adding value and supporting learners to defy the academic, emotional and social challenges they face daily (Bryan & Henry, 2012). School intervention programmes, in most cases, are designed for learners instead of with learners, disregarding learners' voices thus making the programmes redundant and unsuccessful (Bryan, 2005; 2009; Bryan & Henry, 2008). Partnerships formed between parents, schools, and communities serve as social capital and networks that empower parents to support learners to succeed (Epstein & Sanders, 2000).

Warm and supportive interpersonal relationships have been found to act as protective factors that are good prompters of academic resilience and a positive outlook on education (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Furthermore, close relationships serve as a base for the formation of rewarding relationships as learners navigate the outside world. Parental support gives learners a sense of security and confidence to withstand academic stressors, peer pressure and a negative school environment, as well as assisting them to thrive academically (Kaplan *et al.*, 1996). Contrarily, alienated and conflicting interpersonal relationships are regarded as stressors that deter and disrupt learners' academic functioning and resilience (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Bryan (2005) reports that when family members are involved in learners' schoolwork, learners are more likely to do well academically, have good behaviour, attend school regularly, have good social skills, and enrol for tertiary education, irrespective of their SES context. Therefore, recent studies have cast doubts on the myth that learners from low SES contexts do badly in school due to their circumstance (Bryan, 2005). The outstanding feature amongst the highly performing schools in the Global South is

the high expectations for all students, extra support offered to those who need it, as well as parent and community partnerships (Bryan, 2005). Ebersöhn (2012) suggests the term 'flock response' to describe the effort of jointly accessing, mobilising and sustaining resources to counteract risk factors. Ebersöhn (2012) introduced the concept of the Relationship-Resourced Resilience (RRR) model to describe the joint effort in fighting risk factors.

Good interpersonal relationships with siblings, peers and teachers are regarded as protective factors leading to academic resilience as interpersonal relationships offer comfort (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). According to Kruger and Prinsloo (2008), teachers could foster academic resilience in learners from low SES households by formulating accommodating activities that incorporate learners' interests, abilities, prior knowledge, experiences and styles of learning. Furthermore, listening to learners, giving them individual attention, calling them by their names, showing them respect, and creating a non-threatening environment where learners freely express themselves are also considered helpful strategies (Brooks, 2006). Consequently, trusting relationships with teachers could impact learners positively by encouraging them (Brooks, 2006).

Adults who have a relationship with their learners serve as role models who model good behaviour to learners, thus promoting resilient behaviour (Gunnestad, 2006). Such networks also imbue strong values in learners as they aspire to mimic the behaviour associated with the people they love and respect, this therefore serves as a great motivator towards developing academic resilience (Gunnestad, 2006).

These relationships further promote academic resilience by decreasing the effects of the risk factors on learners (Rutter, 1990).

2.6.2 Individual characteristics

Individual attributes/characteristics are believed to be part of protective factors that help learners to develop resilient behaviour (Garmezy, 1991). This has been evident as some at-risk children, such as those raised by alcoholic parents, have defied the odds and become successful individuals, while only one out of four became an

alcoholic (Benard, 1991). The degree of resilience varies accordingly from individual to individual, and might decline over time if the protective factors diminish in stressful conditions and thus fail, leaving the individual vulnerable (Gizir & Aydin, 2009). Personal traits that foster academic resilience include, amongst others, internal locus of control, and autonomy (Gifford, Briceno-Perriot & Mianzo, 2006).

Internal locus control and resilience are centred around the individual himself/herself (Celik, Cetik & Tuktun, 2014). How individuals respond to challenges is determined by their level of resilience, thus people with an internal locus of control see challenge in relation to their own actions (Celik, Cetik & Tuktun, 2014). Internal locus of control is considered as one of the protective factors (Bolger & Patterson, 2001). In light of this, resilient learners believe in their ability to solve problems based on their previous experience (Cowen *et al.*, 1990). A hardy personality was identified as a protective component against challenges, and learners with a hardy personality were regarded as adaptable (Mampane & Bouwer, 2006). Mampane and Bouwer (2006) postulate that instead of developing maladaptive behaviour, being in denial, resilient children accept their situation and find ways to overcome or rise above their negative circumstances.

The way in which learners perceive their challenging situations either as permanent or temporal/changeable affect how they deal with them, i.e. if they view intelligence as fixed, they might give up if they struggle at school thinking they will never succeed (Dweck, 2012). This would also be evident in the way in which they interact with and relate to their peers - if they feel victimised and excluded by their peers, they might feel a need to retaliate by being aggressive as they view the situation as permanent (Dweck, 2012). Using Intrinsic Theory (personal perceptions, or an individual's personal judgement) lens, which regards intelligence and personality either as fixed/unchangeable or flexible, fixed thoughts would discourage learners by making them believe that challenges are permanent or, paradoxically, learners could view adverse situations as changeable and thus develop resilience and become optimistic about the future (Liu *et al.*, 2014; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Intrinsic Theory can be likened to the internal locus of control as they both relate to how individuals see or perceive a challenging situation, either as permanent or

flexible/changeable (Celik, Cetik & Tuktun, 2014; Liu *et al.*, 2014; Nussbaum & Dweck, 2008; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). According to Rattan *et al* (2006) and Herman (2012), Intrinsic Theory has two views, namely: Entity and Incremental Theories. On the one hand, Entity Theory catastrophises every situation demining ones' abilities (judging them by their shortcomings and challenges), and its world view is characterised by threats and defences (Herman, 2012). Consequently, this relates to the internal locus of control and how individuals view their circumstances/situations as characterised by threats or defences (Herman, 2012; Liu *et al.*, 2014; Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Incremental Theory, on the other hand, views every challenge and setback as an opportunity for learning, growth and improvement (Herman, 2012). How learners view challenges would affect how they react to them, for example, a negative view would exacerbate their state of helplessness and vulnerability, while a positive view would foster resilience (Herman, 2012). Negative thinking may be detrimental to learners' wellbeing and academic success, and could discourage resilient behaviour while promoting feelings of hopelessness (Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

On the contrary, learners could choose a positive mindset regarding adverse conditions, which is crucial for learners' success, both academically and in life (Herman, 2012). Yeager and Dweck (2012) state that learners' mindset could be changed and thus promote resilient behaviour. Hope was also found to be contributory to resilience. Hope is defined as a mental process that uses pathway and agency thinking, which is goal directed (Celik *et al.*, 2015). Celik *et al.* (2015) further define the two components of hope as follows: a pathway (the ability to identify ways that would enable one to reach ones' goals) and agency (believing in ones' ability to reach set goals). Consequently, individuals who succeed in life must be goal directed in whatever they want to achieve (Celik *et al.*, 2014). Celik *et al.* (2015) classify pathway and agency as motivational components, with pathway referring to 'know how' while agency refers to 'can do'.

2.6.3 Other protective factors according to the Bioecology Model

Table 2.2 below represents factors that contribute to the development of academic resilience, according to Benzies and Mychasuik (2008). The factors are classified

according to the different levels of the Ecology Model, which are: individual, family, and community. Several factors are listed below, each level as indicated in the table.

Table 2.2: Examples of protective factors (adapted from Benzies & Mychasuik, 2008, p.105).

Individual	Family	Community
• Emotional regulation. • Belief system. • Effective coping skills. • Increased education, skills and training. • Health. • Temperament. • Gender.	• Family structure. • Cohesion. • Stimulating environment. • Adequate housing. • Stable income. • Social support. • Family of origin influence.	• Peer acceptance. • Supportive mentos. • Access to quality schools. and childcare. • Access to quality healthcare.

According to Figure 2.1 below, good social networks, such as warm relationships, parental support, connectedness, and good role models serve as protective factors that buffer and promote academic resilience. Furthermore, personal traits such as personal perceptions/believing in one's ability to reach the desired goals, a positive mindset, and internal locus of control have also been regarded as contributory to buffering resilience. Both social networks and positive personal traits foster academic resilience by helping learners to maintain a positive outlook on life, thus reducing the negative feelings.

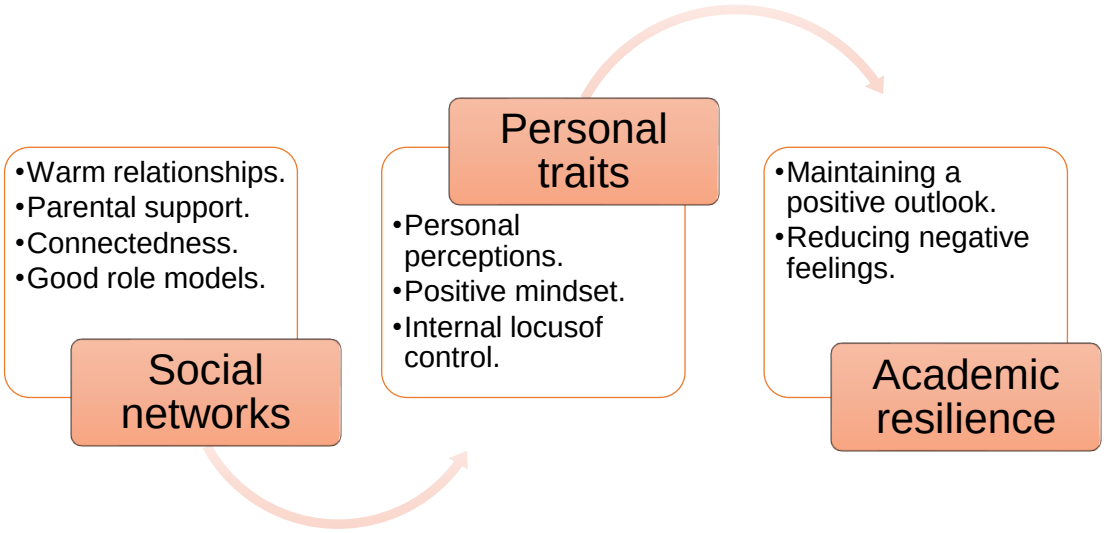

Figure 2.1: Model for the development of academic resilience based on the protective factors mentioned above

2.7 COMMUNITY CARE WORKERS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS ACADEMIC RESILIENCE

According to Herber and Johnston (2013), CCWs form part of the multidisciplinary team that provide care to people who need physical, social, emotional, and financial support. Herber and Johnston (2013) state that despite the great contribution that CCWs are making, there seems to be little research about their role.

This suggests that more research needs to be done to shed more light on their role. Presently CCWs play the following roles: addressing the client's personal care, like cleaning and bathing them; by giving them social and emotional support, i.e. by listening and talking to them; lastly, by providing domestic support/doing house chores for them (Herber & Johnston, 2013). The World Health Organization (2004) states that for children's normal growth to take place, caregivers should be able to respond correctly to children's physical needs, such as thirst, hunger, and children's need to relieve themselves. Younger children also are responsive to their caregiver's facial expression, emotions, and mood. Caring engagement promotes the healthy

development of vulnerable children and maximises children's ability to withstand stressors and develop resilience (WHO, 2004).

In this study, the participating CCWs were located at a drop-in centre where learners from primary and secondary school and their families interacted through the support programmes facilitated by the centre. Mampane (2017) states that most community-based intervention programmes, such as drop-in centres, help to buffer learners and communities from the adverse situations they face. The drop-in centres provide a warm, caring, and supportive environment for the learners as they interact with adults (Mampane, 2017). Learners are afforded opportunities for academic, social, personal, recreational, and cultural development (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). Furthermore, these programmes serve as a support system to learners whose parents are not competent to help them with homework, and provide them with nutritious food, as well as social and personal skills development (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

However, alternatively, as stated by Molepo and Delport (2015), CCWs meet challenges, among those challenges are the recipients of their caring services (Molepo & Delport, 2015). According to CCWs, it is not easy for learners from low SES households to receive these services (Molepo & Delport, 2015). The reason for this is that some, if not all of the learners have been through experiences that are traumatic, hence they find themselves in unfamiliar settings with strangers and struggle to cope with it and adjust (Molepo & Delport, 2015). The second challenge is managing the behaviour of learners as learners' experiences alter their behaviour, thus making it challenging to work with them (Molepo & Delport, 2015).

Mampane (2017) has discovered that although CCWs' work is found to be commendable; they most often lack support. A lack of support not only makes their work difficult, but it also causes them to be ineffective in rendering their services (Mampane, 2017). CCWs do not receive any proper training for the services they render, and the amount of money that they are given is below the minimum wage (Mampane, 2017). Although the Department of Social Development (SDS) aims to relieve the stress of families in distress, they do not seem to be doing enough as they fail to support the CCWs (Mampane, 2017).

2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was carried out using Ungar's Social Ecology of Resilience framework as a lens. According to the framework, resilience occurs even when there are a multitude of adversities. The focus therefore needs to be on what role social and physical ecologies play to yield positive developmental outcomes when individuals are faced with an extreme amount of stress (Ungar, 2011). It is evident that children's development of a positive outcome depends on a facilitative environment, which provides opportunities that foster wellbeing (Ungar, 2011). There are four principles that form this framework (see Figure 2.2 below). These principles help us to understand the divergence in why some children succeed under stressful conditions while others fail (Ungar, 2011).

Figure 2.2 below represents the four principles of Ungar's Social Ecology of Resilience Model.

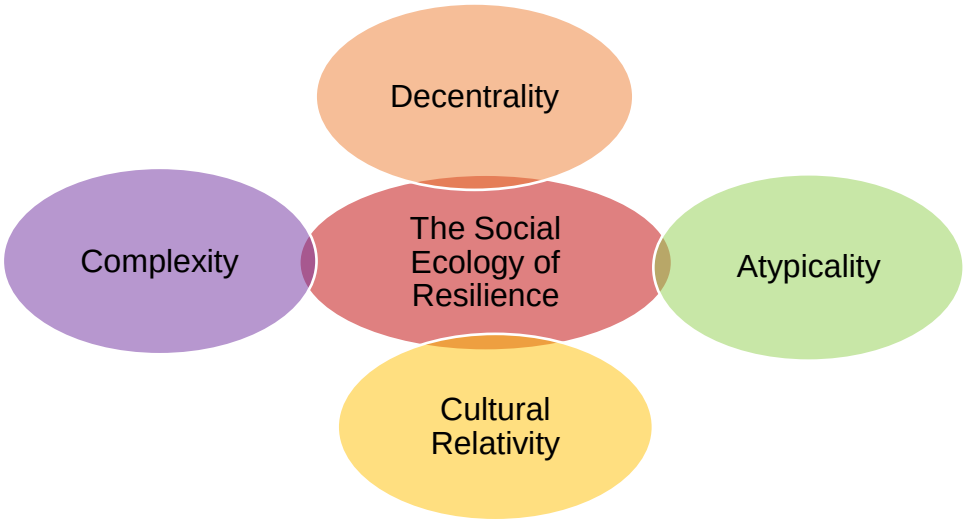

Figure 2.2: The principles of Social Ecology of Resilience according to Ungar (2011)

Social Ecology of Resilience is founded on four principles, namely: decentrality, complexity, atypicality, and cultural relativity (Ungar, 2011). Ungar (2011) states that it is within these principles that individual qualities associated with coping are activated

to facilitate individuals' social and physical ecologies to protect them from risk while promoting development.

It is evident that despite the numerous adversities and extremely stressful conditions that learners from low socio-economic status households face, both physical (enriching environment) and social (relationships and culture) ecologies can facilitate growth and the development of positive wellbeing.

2.8.1 Decentrality

The concept of resilience could be understood by looking at the interaction between individuals and the environment (Lerner, 2006). Mtsweni (2018) highlights the importance of understanding the environmental factors surrounding individuals and how these influence developments as individuals interact with these environments. Most of the resilience literature, however, still focuses on individuals' level of growth caused by their environment, thus making environment the secondary variable (that could cause a problem) (Ungar, 2011). Consequently, this subject-centred approach wrongly places the responsibility of resilience on victims and stressful environments by looking at how children would take advantage of the environmental resources available (Rutter, 2005; Seccombe, 2002; Seidman & Pedersen, 2003; Ungar, 2005). Despite the poor living conditions of learners in Mamelodi (a lack of proper housing, poverty, and a lack of parental support), learners can still thrive with high social competence brought about by good social networks (e.g. good neighbourhoods, friends, a good school environment, and support from CCWs) (Mampane, 2006). According to Wyman (2003), recent studies suggest that children change not because of what they do, but because of what the environment offers. In their research, Ungar and Liebenberg (2013) have discovered that social organisations and culture contribute immensely to the quality of a neighbourhood. Children from high SES (rich) neighbourhoods have competent prosocial skills compared to their counterparts from low SES (poor) neighbourhoods (Ungar & Liebenberg, 2013).

There was, however, a variance in Ungar and Liebenberg (2013) 's findings, which was brought about by individual factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, family structure, SES and duration of time that individuals have resided in a neighbourhood.

When exploring individual factors further, gender (girls were more vulnerable) was found to be a high-risk factor, as well as race (Black children were discovered to have low prosocial skills, both those from advantaged and disadvantaged communities respectively). Individuals' interaction with their neighbourhood was found to be contextually and culturally determined (Frandkin *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, this suggests that resilience in a high-risk environment is dependent on culturally relevant resources rather than on individual characteristics (Unger, 2011). Learners from low SES backgrounds who are faced with numerous adversities, such as poor or a lack of parental support, poverty, and poorly resourced schools can thrive and develop academic resilience if they are exposed to repairing, enriching, and nurturing environments (Ungar 2011). The Ecological Theory of Resilience stresses the nature of children's physical and social ecology first, the interaction process between children and the environment second, and children's inclination toward positive development last.

The principle of decentrality is relevant to this study as it postulates that learners from low socio-economic contexts can attain academic resilience amid adversities by navigating towards available resources. Learners, however, need to understand what their environment offers in order to benefit from it. This study aimed to explore the role that CCWs play to help leaners navigate towards the available resources.

2.8.2 Complexity

Complexity and chaos are used interchangeably as they both refer to unpleasant behaviour that violates rules but never collapses (Langton, 1986). Accordingly, Ungar (2011) has identified the relationship between physical and social ecologies, as well as the predictable outcomes as a complex process. Plsek and Greenhalgh (2001) describe it as the state of being at the edge/midpoint of positive and negative. Research findings show unexpected reactions from highly resourced and poorly resourced individuals in relation to risk factors (Solomon & Laufer, 2005). Apparently, factors such as a change in contexts, i.e. schools, migration and change in relationships portray how individuals from high-resourced and low-resourced contexts bounce back after setbacks (Martin, 2002; Werner & Smith, 2001). Consequently, one

cannot expect an individual to be resilient in different contexts. Resilience is therefore context-bound as individuals can show resilient behaviour in one context while showing contrary behaviour in a different setting (Masten & Powell, 2003). Not understanding the relationship between protective factors and predictable outcomes impedes the potential contributions that a study on resilience can make towards human development science (Barton, 2005).

Phelps, Balsano, Fay, Peltz, Zimmerman, Lerner and Lerner's (2007) study of Positive Youth Development (PYD) and the incident of internalising and externalising risk has identified five developmental pathways for PYD: "consistently low, increasing, decreasing, consistently medium, and consistently high" (Ungar, 2011, p.7); three ways of externalising risk, "non, low stable and increasing" (p.7); and four patterns of internalising risk, "low stable, decreasing, increasing, and up-down" (p.7). This outcome suggests that children with high PYD have less internalised and externalised risks (Phelps *et al.*, 2007). There was, however, a decrease in PYD overtime while the decrease of internalising and externalising risks fluctuated interchangeably (Phelps *et al.*, 2007). The good or bad outcomes depend on the intensity of the risk posed by the changing environment (Prior & Erikson, 2013). This argument is in alignment with Zolkoski and Bullock's (2012) argument, which makes a distinction between the functions of protective process both in low- and high-risk environments, with specific factors being dependent on the child's exposure to them. Children who have access to resources will not necessarily be resilient in all contexts, more emphasis therefore needs to be placed on the complexity of the quality of children's environment and less on children's characteristics in order to nurture resilience (Ungar, 2004).

Complexity hampers the generalisability of how physical and social ecologies affect resilience unless the two remain constant. Complexity is therefore equated to equifinality, meaning multiple beginnings might result in multiple desirable outcomes by different processes in different ecologies (Ungar, 2014).

Learners from low SES backgrounds may develop socially acceptable ways of coping in different settings depending on what the setting offer at the given time. This would, however, depend more on the environment than on individual characteristics (Ungar,

2011). The principle of complexity is relevant to this study as it aimed to investigate, explore and describe unpleasant behaviours that violate the rules while supporting learners' academic resilience according to the CCWs. Hence, this study investigated CCWs' perspectives concerning academic resilience and complexity.

2.8.3 Atypicality

Equifinality focuses more on the process than on human traits. Context determines the usefulness of resilience-related characteristics as protective factors instead of these being determined by good or bad behaviour (Ungar, 2011). Moreover, Ungar *et al.* (2008) have discovered that dropping out of school is an atypical response that is seen as a protective factor by marginalised Black learners adapting in an ethno-racial environment irrespective of its long-term negative consequences.

Jefferis (2016) states that individuals who find themselves in hostile situations sometimes resort to coping strategies that are considered maladaptive and are not socially and lawfully acceptable (Ungar, 2011). Therefore, resilient behaviour should be judged in context instead of according to the norm, as protective factors in one context could be risk factors in another (Malindi & Theron, 2010). Lying to protect oneself from being caught by the police and stealing money are examples of atypical behaviour that were found to be used by underprivileged children in South Africa (Malindi & Theron, 2010). Girls who experience bullying at school where they feel unsafe as their teachers do not protect them resort to absenting themselves from school. The behaviour is not desirable, yet it protects these girls from a risky situation (Jefferis, 2016).

This study aimed to investigate atypical behaviours that are used by learners from Matimba/Sinqobile. The information will add to the body of knowledge on academic resilience, bolstering that already found in the literature consulted for this study.

2.8.4 Cultural relativity

Culture and context play a vital role in children's ability to withstand stressors and bounce back as they access the different available resources (Elliotte *et al.*, 2006).

According to Theron and Theron (2010), being connected to their culture also boosts learners' academic resilience. Wong, Wong and Scott (2006) describe culture as a set of shared values, beliefs, customs, and languages, thus any definition of resilience should take those aspects into consideration. What is considered a resilient behaviour in one culture might be considered otherwise in another culture (Wong *et al.*, 2006). When considering cultural relativity, the use of developmental theories would be irrelevant as different aspects are considered in each culture as evidence of conflict (Ungar, 2011).

What is considered competent in one culture might be considered as being incompetent in other. Moreover, Robinson (2007) mentions the issue of language acquisition as mastering one language might mark success and reaching a milestone in one culture, while in other cultures mastering three languages might be the ideal norm. Culture is thus a determining factor in what is considered acceptable and valuable in a group of people. It consequently affects how people network and the meaning they attach to those networks (Gunnestad, 2006). Culture therefore determines which skills and capabilities are appreciated (considered to portray resilience) (Gunnestad, 2006).

South Africa, and specifically Mamelodi in this case, is both multicultural and multilingual. This study aimed to establish what cultural skills and capabilities foster academic resilience in the learners at Matimba/Sinqobile as they came from different cultural backgrounds. This was done exploring the participating CCWs' perspectives concerning the principle of cultural relativity.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The above literature review provides a broad overview of how resilient behaviour can be buffered and promoted. However, it conscientises people to consider how culture and context can influence resilience and how a resilient behaviour could be considered a risk factor in another context. Ungar's (2011) Social Ecological Resilience Theory highlights the issue by presenting four principles that govern resilience, namely:

decentrality, complexity, atypicality, and cultural relativity. These principles help individuals to be resilient in different contexts (Ungar, 2011).

In the following chapter, the research methodology carried out in this study is presented and explored.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A qualitative research method was employed in this study, particularly a single case study method. Qualitative research provides the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being researched within the participants' contexts (Mahlangu, 2016). It relies more on verbal (linguistic) accounts than numerical data, and is meaning-based rather than relying on statistical data analysis (Maree, 2016). Participants take part in a natural setting where researchers can observe the interaction, viewing social life as it occurs (Maree, 2016). In this study, the data were gathered through a focus group discussion based on the research question (Community Care Workers' role in support the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts). The research question was broken down into simpler questions, which will be highlighted in Chapter 4.

A small group of six participants was selected for further data verification and member checking as a final means of data authentication. Thematic data analysis was carried out as the method of choice and is also discussed in this chapter.

Figure 3.1 below is a schematic representation of the process that I followed during the study. I used an interpretive metatheoretical approach in this study. As this was a qualitative study, I considered the participants' voices as vital. I used a single case study design, and purposive and convenient sampling methods were used to select the participants. Furthermore, a focus group discussion was used to gather rich data from the CCWs. A thematic data analysis was then used to analyse the data gathered in order to answer the research questions and verify the assumptions held in this researcher.

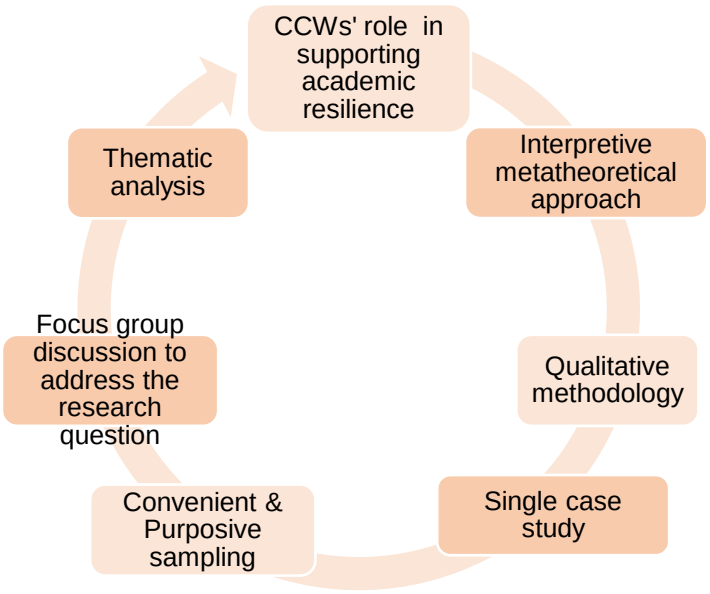

Figure 3.1: Visual illustration of the research process

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVISM

This research was guided by an interpretive stance, which advocates the need to take into cognisance the subjective nature of the participants and the perception of their world as the starting point to understanding a social phenomenon (Maree, 2016). Interpretivists believe that reality is socially constructed instead of being objectively determined (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Moreover, studying people in their social contexts or natural settings enables researchers to understand the perceptions that participants have of their own actions (Maree, 2016). According to Maree (2016, p. 61), the interpretive perspective is therefore based on the following assumptions:

- **Human life can only be understood from within**. The focus is on people's subjective experience and how they share and construct meaning, as well as how they interact with each other.
- **The human mind is the purposive source or origin of meaning.** To gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, we can start by investigating and exploring how meaning is constructed, and thus get the insight to improve our understanding of the phenomenon.

- **Human behaviour is affected by knowledge of the social world.** Interpretivists believe that there are multiple realities instead of one universal reality. Accordingly, in interpretivism, reality can only be understood within context and across time, as constructed by those involved.
- **The social world does not exist independently of human knowledge.** According to Maree (2016), as researchers, we have our own prior knowledge and understanding. The questions that we ask are thus influenced by that knowledge. Our knowledge is also limited to our exposure, experience and the meanings imparted.

It is for this reason that I chose an interpretivist lens to help me understand the subjective experiences (different perspectives/multiple realities) of the CCWs, the meaning they gave to academic resilience, and the role that they played in enhancing it. This helped me to identify the gaps in terms of what still needs to be done to support the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 Research design - case study design

Case study design refers to a factual inquiry about a current phenomenon (case), set in a real-world context (Yin, 2009). It is the process through which the research is done in collaboration between the researcher and the participants. A case study's authentication may come from fieldwork, verbal accounts, observation, or any combination of the aforementioned methods (Yin, 1981). Furthermore, case study aims to explore the attributes, actions, attitude and social structures of individuals or groups, applying any of the following methods: active participation, observation, interviews (individual or group) and analysing data (Thomas, 2010). Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 544) concur with Thomas by adding that a case study is characterised as an approach "that facilitates exploration of phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources." Due to their exploratory nature, case studies are reckoned as being different from other major methods of social inquiry like surveys and experiments (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000). Case studies explore and investigate social

phenomena using the participants' lens (Meyer, 1998; 2015). Baxter and Jack (2008) and Yin (2003) are of the opinion that a case study method should be considered if: (a) The focus of the study is to answer 'why' and 'how', (b) If the behaviour of the participants cannot be manipulated, and (c) There are no clear boundaries between the phenomenon and the context. Yin (2013) states that multiple case studies aim to reproduce findings across cases, it therefore requires the researcher to explore the differences inside and amongst the cases. Alternatively, a descriptive single case study design was deemed relevant to this study as it aimed to investigate and explore the lived experiences of a single group of research participants. In this case, the research participants were the CCWs. The study was conducted in a natural setting, which was the drop-in centre in Mamelodi.

3.3.2 Sampling

3.3.2.1 Purposive and convenient sampling

The study employed non-probability sampling methods, namely, purposive and convenient sampling. Maree (2016) indicates that these sampling methods are classified into two, viz. probability methods and non-probability methods. Probability methods are believed to have no individual/subjective interferences, while non-probability methods do. Purposive sampling is employed when participants are selected specifically with a particular purpose in mind, while in convenient sampling, the participants are chosen due to their accessibility (Maree, 2016). Furthermore, purposive sampling involves well-informed participants (Maree, 2016).

This technique is also known as judgemental sampling as participants with certain qualities or status are chosen intentionally (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). The information gathered is used to understand certain phenomenon within that specific group. Tongco (2007) highlights that the findings of purposive sampling are limited to the population studied. The researcher decides on the information needed for the study and selects participants who are perceived to be good sources (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). Based on the contributions made by Maree (2016), purposive sampling requires people with lived experiences. Consequently, 12 CCWs were purposefully selected to give an account of their lived experiences of working with learners from

low socio-economic contexts at the Matimba/Sinqobile drop-in centre. The purposive and convenient sampling methods assisted me to inquire about the CCWs' experience regarding working with learners from low SES households, and they were easily accessible. For quality assurance purposes, a small focus group of six people was further used to verify the accuracy of the recorded data.

3.3.2.2 Sampling participants

According to the manager and the social auxiliary workers employed there, Matimba/Sinqobile has 19 staff members, 11 of whom are CCWs, one social worker, two social auxiliary workers working as CCWs, two cooks, two centre coordinators and a centre manager. Twelve participants were selected from the 19 CCWs as they worked closely with learners and their families.

3.3.2.3 Rapport building

I introduced myself and afforded the CCWs an opportunity to introduce themselves for rapport building/contracting. This was done to create a safe and stress free environment for the focus group discussion. Thereafter, I went through the consent form (see Appendix A) with the participants to clarify the ethical issues around the research process. I informed the participants that participation is voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time if they so wished. I explained that if they withdrew, the information obtained from them would be excluded. I also informed them that before participating in the research process, they needed to sign a consent form as an indication that I had explained the whole process to them, and that they were giving me permission to work with them. Thereafter, the CCWs were requested to sign the consent forms before engaging in the process. I then introduced this study before engaging in the focus group discussion.

3.3.2.4 Research site

Matimba/Sinqobile is an NGO that is supported by the Department of Social Development (DSD). It caters specifically to learners who are either infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. Teachers refer children to the centre, the centre then does intake as they prioritise which learners to admit at the centre. Three assessment forms

are used during the intake, namely, a family background form for the whole family's assessment and to capture the household's details. Then, there is a form for the adult/head of the household, which captures the socio-economic status of the adult/caregiver(if they are employed or living on government grant), psychosocial support, nutrition, vital documents, poverty alleviation (garden) and health status. Lastly, there is a child beneficiary assessment form providing information about learners' orphanhood status, health, nutrition support, psychosocial support, reproductive assessment, educational support, grants received, services referred to, such as SASSA, home affairs, a clinic or police station, action taken as a result of the referral (child removed from parents, court order, treatment provided, no further action necessary), and child protection incidents identified, i.e. child successfully placed, sexual abuse case opened, child using drugs, child drinking alcohol or Form 22 (reporting of abuse or deliberate neglect of child) to be completed. The centre provides the following services to vulnerable learners around the Mamelodi township:

- Psychosocial support.
- Emotional support in the form of support group counselling.
- Life skills through support groups where more focus is put on sex education, teenage pregnancy, and sexual infection as all learners are either infected or affected thereby. The aim is to make leaners aware of the risks involved in becoming sexually active at a young age, destigmatising HIV/AIDS, and increasing social acceptance.
- Educational support done through homework supervision, attending parents' meetings, providing the materials needed at school such as stationary, food, and sanitary pads received from sponsors. These sponsors include Woolworths, Pick 'n Pay and communities sponsoring children by providing school shoes.

Matimba/Sinqobile works in collaboration with numerous stakeholders, including, among others, the Department of Occupational Therapists from the University of Pretoria who help learners who are not doing well in school. Some of the stakeholders are police stations, libraries, SASSA, home affairs and clinics. One of the satellite centres is at Stanza, and this centre specifically focuses on skills training for people

who completed Grade 12. All of the centres aim to give people the wings to fly - they teach people to be able to stand for themselves and resile amidst adversities. Hence, learners and their families are reassessed every six months to see if they can self-sustain (resile). This allows them to see families and children that are ready to stand for themselves (are resilient) so that they can move out of the system to give way to those who are more needy. Unfortunately, most of the time, some of the beneficiaries stay in the system for more than six months because of their state as the CCWs feel that they cannot release them as their state has not changed. The meal that the learners receive from the centre is the only meal of the day for some of them. If released from the centre, there is a high probability that they may go for days without food. Matimba/Sinqobile even caters to children who are not enrolled with them who are referred by teachers. Image 1 and 2 below show pictures of the Matimba/Sinqobile centre.

Image 1: Photo of the Matimba/Sinqobile Drop-in Centre

Image 2: Photo 2 of the Matimba/Sinqobile Drop-in Centre

3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION

3.4.1 Focus groups

According to Powell and Single (1996), a focus group is a group of individuals selected and gathered by the researcher with the purpose of obtaining their personal experiences through discussions and comments on the researched topic/subject. Rabiee (2004) states that in this technique, participants are selected with a purpose in mind and are asked guiding questions to address the topic/phenomenon studied. Powell and Single (1996) further highlight the importance of guided interaction during the discussion to generate details of rich emotions, experiences and the reasoning behind individuals' actions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes. Focus group activities may vary from watching a movie, or holding debates/discussions depending on the set-up. Maree (2016) lists the following as data gathering techniques that may be used in the focus group method: taking notes, recording the sessions, and taking clinical observation notes.

The outstanding feature of a focus group is its combination of verbal (engagements) and non-verbal (observation) data capturing techniques. One focus group of 12 participants was used, and I further used another focus group of six members selected from the initial 12 members for member checking and data authentication. See table 4.1.

3.4.2 Data collection process

I went to the centre with Professor Mampane and one of my peer researchers for introduction on the 12th of February 2020. Professor Mampane introduced us to the centre manager, the social worker and two CCWs who worked as social auxiliary workers. The team gave us a full overview of what the centre does. We were then given an opportunity to ask questions about the centre, introduce our research topic, and indicate how many CCWs we would need for this study. We further made an appointment for Stage 2 of data collection, which was the signing of the consent form, and the focus group discussion of one hour, which happened on the 12th of March 2020.

Initially I had a group of 12 participants, see figure 3.2. The focus group sessions were at the Matimba/Sinqobile Drop-in Centre in Mamelodi. My role as a moderator was to facilitate open and non-threatening dialogues in a relaxed setting among non-judgemental, good listeners (who shared the same attributes as well as proximity and language). I used an audio recorder to record the group interactions. As a moderator, I also established rapport with the CCWs.

The discussions/engagements were guided by the seven questions (see Appendix B) derived from the research question, as suggested by Harrell and Bradley (2009). I divided the focus group into two sessions, refer to figure 3.2. The first interaction session was a rapport building session whereby I as the researcher/moderator and participants introduced ourselves. In the next step, I addressed and highlighted the following ethical issues: confidentiality, informed consent, autonomy, and anonymity. Thereafter, we engaged in a discussion of the research topic.

Figure 3.2 below is the schematic representation of the process followed during data collection.

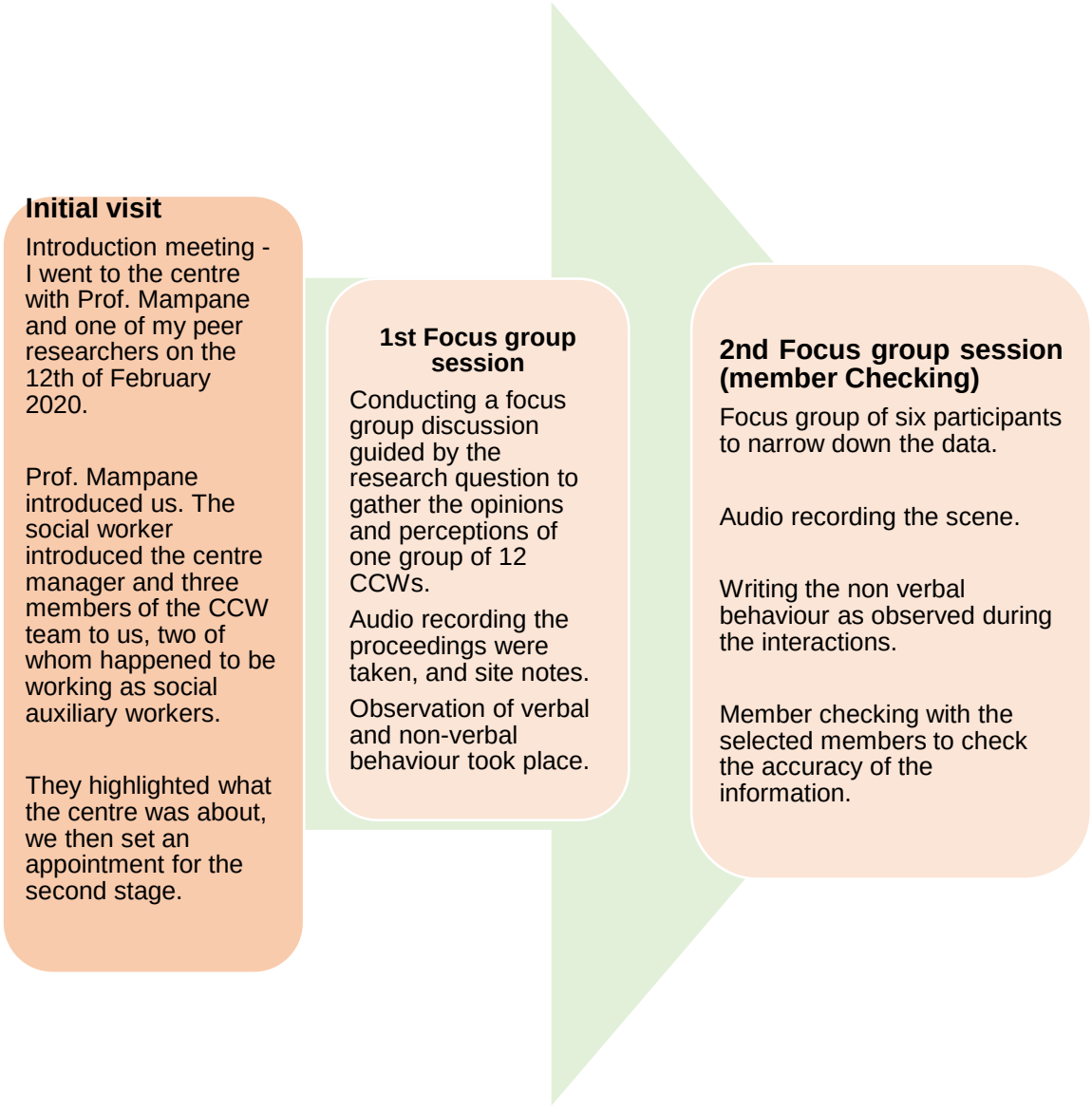

Figure 3.2: Schematic representation of the data collection process

Maree (2016) emphasises involving some of the focus group members when capturing information as this may help the researcher to get rich meaning. Taking observation notes of the observed behaviour is vital as a focus group involves both verbal and non-verbal data. The second focus group discussion was conducted of six members who were selected from the first focus group discussed of twelve members.

The chosen data collection and capturing techniques were relevant to this study as they allowed the CCWs to raise their viewpoints on how to support the academic resilience of learners from low SES backgrounds. The initial focus group of 12 people

participated, then the group was further reduced to the focus group of 6 participants for member checking and data authentication to increase the accuracy of the data. Their viewpoints were recorded while I took observation notes.

The advantage of using a focus group discussion is that it often fosters the feeling of belonging to a group, and reduces feelings of intimidation (Maree, 2016). It can also generate rich data as all viewpoints are taken into consideration. (Powell & Single, 1996).

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

3.5.1 Thematic analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2019, p. 2), Thematic Analysis (TA) is "a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set". The researcher focuses on the meaning of the shared data (experiences) of the participants to make sense of the data (Braun *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, the researcher can identify the commonalities among the participants' verbal accounts in relation to the research question or the topic discussed (Braun *et al.*, 2019). Although several patterns can be identified, the researcher focuses mainly on the patterns that are relevant in response to the research question (Braun *et al.*, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2014) classify thematic analysis as a flexible method of analysis since it can be applied in numerous ways, among those are inductive and deductive approaches to data coding. An inductive approach to data coding and analysis is regarded as a bottom-up approach as it is guided by themes that are derived from the content (Braun & Clark, 2014).

Deductive data coding and analysis, on the contrary, is regarded as a top-down approach to data coding and analysis, the reason being that the researcher comes up with themes, topics and concepts that are used to interpret the data (Braun & Clark, 2012). According to Braun and Clark (2012), researchers rarely use a single method as it is not possible to use only the inductive or deductive approach on their own, therefore researchers combine both approaches for better outcomes. Thematic analysis has six phases according to Braun *et al.* (2019).

Figure 3.3 below shows the six phases of thematic analysis as indicated by Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 60; Braun *et al.*, 2019, p. 18).

The steps are illustrated below:

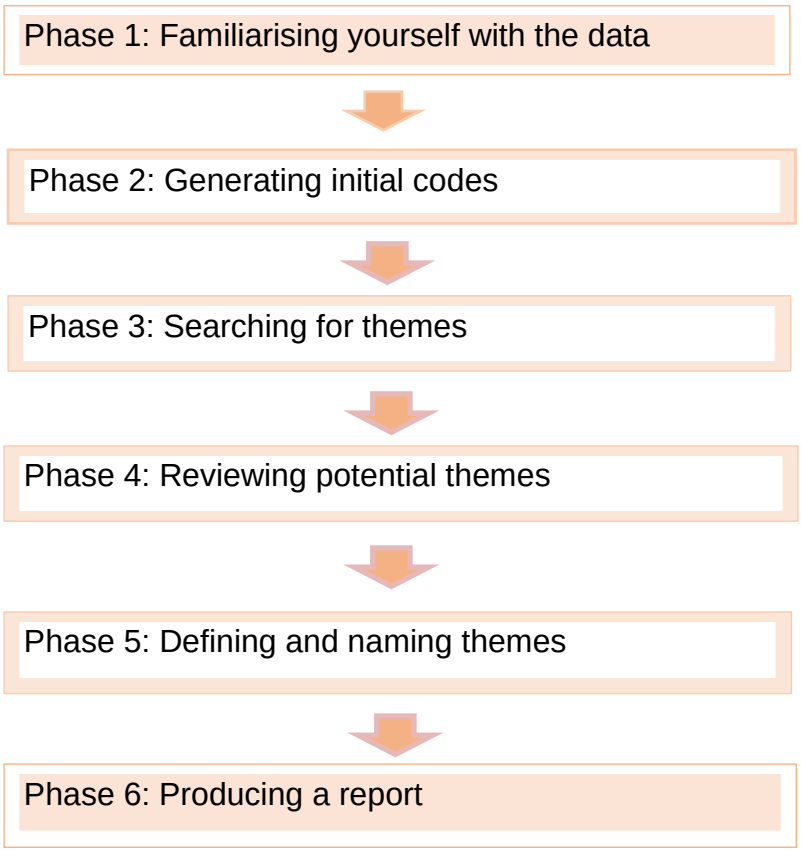

Figure 3.3: The six phases of thematic analysis

Researchers familiarise themselves with the data by reading through the transcript or listening to the audio recording several times to classify recurring themes (Smith & Osborn, 2015). This is Phase 1 of data coding and analysis - according to Braun and Clark (2012), researchers read and re-read the written transcript, listen to the audio recording if available, and use any convenient method to take notes. The methods vary from using a highlighter, writing comments manually and electronically to immersing oneself in the data by reading critically, analytically and asking questions such as how the participants make sense of their experience (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Maree (2016) describes Phase 2 of Figure 3.3, which is coding, as the stage in which the researcher reads the transcripts repeatedly and carefully.

Furthermore, the researcher can use a hard or electronic copy to write their codes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The classification made may be according to similarities, differences, and an emphasis of certain views, as well as the behaviour of the participants (Maree, 2016). The patterns and behaviours are taken from what the researcher observed during the interaction and what was said by the participants (Braun & Clark, 2012). According to Braun and Clarke (2012), connecting the identified themes is vital in thematic analysis. This is Phase 3, where the researcher tries to get meaning from or to understand the identified themes. Braun and Clark (2012) highlight that in thematic analysis, the researcher may group all other information that relate to the identified themes to get rich meaning. During Phase 4, which is reviewing potential themes, the researcher checks the potential themes by referring to the coded data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The researcher might need to disregard the theme if there is no relevant data to support it (Braun & Clark, 2012). According to Braun and Clarke (2012), the following questions are useful in deciding which data to use:

- Is the identified point a theme or just additional data?
- If it is a theme, how relevant is it to the research question/s?
- Does the theme have any limitations in relation to the research questions?
- How much information is there to support the theme?
- Is the theme specific?

The fifth phase is defining and naming the themes. In this stage, researchers need to state how closely the theme is related to the research question, whether it is specifically focused, and whether the themes provide a coherent story (Braun & Clarke, 2014). The sixth phase is producing a report. The report aims to tell a coherent story formed from the interwoven themes. It should be logical, convincing, and answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Thematic analysis added value to the study as it helped me to group the CCWs' views and behaviour accordingly to understand their realities (coherent stories). The information gathered is intended to add to the body of research that is already available about the contribution of CCWs towards supporting the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts.

3.6 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

3.6.1 Trustworthiness and credibility

Assessing trustworthiness in qualitative research is as important as assessing for validity and reliability in quantitative research (Maree, 2016). Researchers are urged to keep the issue of trustworthiness in mind when doing data analysis, recording the findings and making conclusions (Maree, 2016). To ensure the credibility of this study, I followed and documented all of the steps followed throughout the whole research process. Furthermore, to ensure reliability, I used collaborative data capturing and verification as six participants participated in the second focus group discussion for member checking to verify if the data was correct. One of my peer researchers was present during the data collection process.

I used Merrium's six strategies to ensure internal validity (Mahlangu, 2015, p. 14) (refer to Table 4.1):

- **Crystallization** – multiple data collection methods were used to gather an in-depth understanding of the perceived adversities faced by learners from low socio-economic contexts. Additionally, this was done to understand the role that CCWs play to enhance learners' academic resilience.
- **Member checking** – after capturing the data, six participants selected from the group checked the data to verify if it represents what transpired during the focus group discussion. This was done through a focus group discussion as a form of member checking.
- **Observation** – data was collected in three separate sessions (see table 4.1); I also observed for consistency.
- **Peer examination** – my supervisor and one of my peer researchers were there during the first session of data collection to provide assurance and vouchsafe for the study; I continued the process with my peer researcher.
- **Collaborative research** – my peer researcher was involved in the data collection process.

- **Clearing research bias** – the research findings will clear my research assumptions.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The research was done through the interpretive paradigm to gain an understanding of the CCWs' perceived role in supporting the academic resilience of learners from low SES contexts. A descriptive case study and focus group methods were used to gather data from the participants. The study also employed two non-probability methods, purposive and convenient sampling, to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through a qualitative approach.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study gathered through the methods discussed in this chapter. These findings are then explained, and a discussion thereof ensues.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings gathered during the data collection process. The research was conducted at an afterschool drop-in centre known as Matimba/Sinqobile, which has three satellite stations, which are located at the primary schools of the attending learners. Matimba/Sinqobile Drop-in Centre is the main centre and is situated in Mamelodi. The participants included nine Community Care Workers (CCWs), two social auxiliary workers who work as CCWs, and one centre coordinator (see Table 4.1). The research findings will be presented in the form of themes, the sub-themes derived from the themes, as well as categories. I will further include a short discussion and a short summary of each theme and sub-theme.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION DATES

The data collection process was done in three stages as, indicated in Chapter 3. Table 4.1 shows the data collection schedule.

Table 4.1: Data collection schedule and dates

DATE	PURPOSE
12th February 2020 Session 1	Initial introduction session at the centre with supervisor and peer researcher.
18th March 2020 Session 2	First focus group discussion with 12 CCWs.
9th June 2020 Session 3	Second focus group discussion with six CCW members for member checking.

Matimba/Sinqobile has 19 employees comprising one manager, two centre coordinators, two cooks, three social workers, and 11 CCWs. The two social auxiliary workers worked as CCWs as there were no social worker posts at the centre. The participants were selected according to their accessibility and availability on the day as they came from different satellites and attended workshops regularly. The sample consisted of nine CCWs, two social auxiliary workers and one centre coordinator. The focus group discussions were guided by seven questions (see Appendix B). I recorded the discussion with a tape recorder and my cell phone while simultaneously taking clinical observation notes in my diary. At the end of the discussion, the CCWs signed a register. Thereafter, I transcribed the audio data verbatim. I used both my laptop, coloured pens, and paper to highlight codes, which were later grouped into themes and sub-themes.

Tables 4.2 shows the demographic information of the participants who took part in the focus group discussion.

Table 4.2: Demographic information of the participants/CCWs

Identification & ID Symbol	Gender	Qualification	No. of learners in your care	No. of families responsible for	No. of years at the centre	Centre/Satellite working at
Participant 1 (P1)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Koos Matli
Participant 1 (P2)	Female	Matric	198	110	5	Matimba
Participant 3 (P3)	Female	BA social work	18	10	4	Pfundzo Primary
Participant 4 (P4)	Male	Matric	18	10	5	Matimba
Participant 5 (P5)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Koos Matli
Participant 6 (P6)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Matimba
Participant 7 (P7)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Pfundzo Primary

Identification & ID Symbol	Gender	Qualification	No. of learners in your care	No. of families responsible for	No. of years at the centre	Centre/Satellite working at
Participant 8 (P8)	Female	BA social work	18	10	4	Motheo Primary
Participant 9 (P9)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Motheo Primary
Participant 10 (P10)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Motheo Primary
Participant 11 (P11)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Koos Matli
Participant 12 (P12)	Female	Matric	18	10	4	Pfundzo Primary

4.3 RESULTS OF THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

I repeatedly listened to the audio recordings from the focus group interactions, the recordings, observation notes were used as a point of reference when writing the transcripts; they provided rich information. The viewpoints were then grouped together to get a better understanding of the CCWs' perceived support service to boost the academic resilience of learners from low SES households. The similarities and emphasis of information from the different CCWs and the two social auxiliary workers were used as a point of reference for coding. Two themes with two sub-themes each were later derived from the codes.

Table 4.3 provides a full overview of the themes and sub-themes identified during the thematic analysis.

Table 4.3: Themes and sub-themes

THEME	SUB-THEMES
Factors hindering academic resilience:	• Feelings of inadequacy about one's intellectual abilities. • Negative home environments that impact negatively on learners' academic success.
Factors that foster academic resilience:	• Academic support. • Psychosocial support.

4.3.1 Theme 1: factors hindering academic resilience

Theme 1 highlights the experiences, views, and opinions that the participants regarded as hindrances to learners' attainment of academic resilience. Two sub-themes were derived from this theme, namely, feelings of inadequacy about one's intellectual abilities, as well as negative home environments that impact negatively on learners' academic success. Below are the verbatim extracts from which the theme and sub-themes were derived.

Table 4.4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria of Theme 1

SUB-THEME	INCLUSION CTRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
• Feelings of inadequacy about one's intellectual abilities.	Reference to feelings of inadequacy that impact negatively on learners' intellectual abilities.	Reference to feelings of inadequacy that do not impact negatively on learners' intellectual abilities.
• Negative home environments that impact negatively on learners' academic success.	Any reference to negative, unpleasant experiences happening at home that impact negatively on the academic resilience of learners.	Reference to negative and unpleasant experiences happening outside the home that impact negatively on academic resilience.

4.3.1.1 Sub theme 1.1: feelings of inadequacy regarding one's intellectual abilities

Five participants out of the 12 mentioned feelings of inadequacy as one of the factors that impact negatively on how learners view themselves, and ultimately on their attainment of academic resilience. Feelings of academic inadequacy refer to feeling incompetent, powerless, helpless, insufficient, and even feelings of shame (Lashbrook, 2000; Martin & Marsh, 2006). Self-esteem has to do with how people evaluate themselves - as worthy or unworthy, whether they like or dislike themselves, approve or disapprove of themselves, and if they are satisfied with their lives (e.g. performance or knowledge) (Al-Hebaish, 2012).

The quotes below show that the CCWs assumed the role of being tutors by helping learners with their homework as some of the learners seemed to struggle due to low self-esteem. P1 stated that low self-esteem threatens academic resilience as it makes children seem like they do not understand even when they do as they shy away from participating. Some of the learners were unable to express themselves; they felt inadequate even though they had the potential to succeed. They were afraid to give their opinion, thus resulting in them achieving poorly.

> "*The challenge that I can see is that some of these children still have low self-esteem They can't express themselves, even though they know what it takes. The low self-esteem makes the child feel like he/she does not understand" (P1, lines 23-26).*

The CCWs had a support programme in place and had drawn up schedules to help boost learners' academic achievement, confidence, and self-esteem. The schedule indicates what aspect will be dealt with weekly as guided by the learners' needs, including aspects such as support for spelling. Due to learners' feelings of incompetence or lack of confident, learners absent themselves after taking part in the scheduled activities. Low self-esteem prevents some learners from taking full advantage of the programmes put in place to advance them academically.

> *"And the other challenge that we have is children who are slow learners. Sometimes we see them every week, we have the weekly schedule. Let's say on Monday we are helping them with spelling and if the child is a slow learner, he/she will come on Monday, suppose*

we do spelling or something, if they don't feel comfortable and don't have that self-esteem (confidence), the following day they don't come" (P3, lines 47-53).

The CCWs identified learners' perception of themselves as being inadequate or insufficient as leading to them succumbing to peer pressure, trying to please others due to their fear of being rejected. Peer pressure was also mentioned as one of the factors that are detrimental to learners' academic resilience:

"Most of the kids that we are dealing with, they struggle with that - peer pressure, they are trying to adjust to what their peers are doing. So, we try sit them down and tell them that, this is not how you are supposed to be. Stick to your path and know what you want in life so that you can be a better person tomorrow" (P2, lines 35-40).

The CCWs advised learners to be focused instead of being derailed and influenced by what others are doing. They coached and advised their leaners to stick to their path instead. However, this was only effective when the learners attended regularly:

"*Behavioural change is a challenging factor because sometimes kids don't attend as they are supposed to be attending because of their friends, especially those in high school. They see themselves as teenagers or a little bit older to be coming here to the dropping centre, but we are trying to deal with it" (P2, lines 40-43).*

Peer pressure influences some learners to the extent that they change their behaviour and end up not attending regularly as their peers do not attend This was according to CCWs challenging but they try attend to it; a problem the CCWs were working to correct.

The choice of role models through social media is also seen as a threat to learners' academic success. The actions of such role models are viewed as detrimental to learners' academic success, as indicated in the following quotes:

"These children nowadays! They have their own role models, so social media is the most contradicting factor to our children because some of them they choose role models from social media which is another thing. Because when they see maybe their favourite song artist in a beautiful fancy car, with this big house and these beautiful babes, they think that is life." (P4, lines 388-493).

The portrayal of wealth by those role models on social media influence learners' behaviour negatively. Learners try to uplift their status by copying the behaviour and acting as if they are rich, and unfortunately this behaviour impacts their academic performance negatively:

> "*They act as if they are rich even though they come from families that are struggling, they defend themselves by saying they are izikhothane"* (*P5, lines 421-423).*

The township lingo of izikhothane is translated as "those who lick", which refers to a trend where a group of youth dresses up in more expensive attire only to burn them later in a mob gathering to create the impression that they have plenty while they are actually from poor backgrounds (Mnisi, 2015). Furthermore, Izikhothane refers to people who pretend to be rich and get fame from their peers, and the one who is the most famous receives the title of a king (Richards, 2015).

The CCWs identified the adoption of *izikhothane* culture as a risk factor as the leaners uplift their status by pretending to be rich, showing off flashy material goods that they cannot afford instead of focusing on their schoolwork. Parents unknowingly are tricked into funding these activities or acts of portraying wealth as these cause learners to forget about their feelings of insufficiency and feel important for that short period of time. Learners do all of this to try and make themselves feel adequate.

The CCWs also highlighted that within the families with which they worked, female learners often dated older men as they felt rejected by their families. Their feelings of inadequacy and rejection were compensated for by the money that they received from these older men. The learners would see the money they received as a token of love and acceptance, something they did not receive at home.

> "*Young girls give themselves to older men, they think that man gives me love as he gives me money. Something that the child does not get at home because of that, the child feels rejected by family members. When she gets outside, she gets something that she is not getting at home. They feel like this is the life, this is the place, which is very wrong because others end up doing prostitution, some end up leaving their homes. They do not see the reason why they should go to school" (P3, lines 477-485).*

According to the CCWs, many learners were unable to see the value of schooling because of being pushed by their circumstances at home. They ended up feeling that they had an alternative to schooling, dating older men, which in turn disrupted their scholastic progress.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: negative home environments

The CCWs also identified a negative home environment as another factor detracting from learners' attainment of academic resilience, as indicated by the CCWs' utterances below. They sometimes had to go to the learners' homes to investigate what challenges were being faced as some of the learners tended to withdraw due to these challenges and did not disclose what was actually going on.

> *"Sometimes we understand that children are affected by challenges at home where parents are fighting. Children are affected by the behaviour, they become quiet, they don't disclose. It is our duty to see what the problem is, we have to go home and search the problem at home and to speak with the parents" (P2, lines 55-58).*

The CCWs acted as a support system or lifeline to those learners who withdrew as this derailed their academic progress. The CCWs supported learners by speaking to parents as their negative behaviour affected the learners' scholastic performance negatively:

> *"When you go back to check the family background, you will find that the family is dysfunctional and that the father is overprotective of the children, and now he finds that he needs assistance. We try and refer to the social worker" (P 9, lines 378-382).*

The CCWs mentioned a dysfunctional family as one of the risk factors inhibiting academic resilience. P9 stated that family circumstances sometimes affect learners by influencing their behaviour negatively to the extent that their parents cannot handle them but need social workers to intervene. They therefore play the role of referring families to social workers:

> *"We also encourage the wellbeing of families, some of these children because of the background, it is hectic in that family, they are fighting, children become bullies. They bully others and fight with other children, so we don't deal only with children but also with families" (P1, lines 83, 85-87).*

The CCWs working in collaboration with social auxiliary workers support the total wellbeing of families. They help families to overcome their challenges and stabilise as instability threatens leaners' academic progress.

> *"The other way is that we go back to that family, if that child is not coping, we go to the family to find out why that child is behaving like this. Maybe we will find that this child sees that in the family, they behaviour like other the family members" (P6, lines 150-154).*

The home environment affects and influences learners' behaviour even outside the home, thus negatively impacting their academic performance.

According to the social auxiliary workers, they take it upon themselves to support learners academically by advising parents of the need for children to be transferred to schools where they will benefit academically. However, the parents do not always take kindly to having to send their children to special schools, as indicated below:

> "*Parents always deny when you try and tell them that this child needs to be transferred. They deny when you try and say to them that the child is not coping, we need to get him a special school, they always deny and say the child is mine" (P3, lines 105, 107-111).*

A negative home environment is seen by the CCWs as impacting negatively on the learners' academic progress as it affects their schooling:

> *"Also, as part of SGB, I witnessed a child being expelled from school because he/she was selling liquor only to find that his/her home is a stokvel, on weekend they sell liquor. When they go to the parent, she says this thing I gave him/her to sell over the weekend, so you will find that children are not making themselves, it is because of the background" (P1, lines 500-506).*

Sometimes, they assume the role of being mediators between learners, the school, and the parents when the learners' future is threatened.

The CCWs also play a vital role in reviewing the social status of a family and having beneficiaries exit or stay in the programme:

> *"But some of these beneficiaries, you can't just exit from the programme because the meal that they get here is the last meal for the day up until tomorrow when they go to school at*

break time, they eat and they come again the next day. We think of that so that is why some other beneficiaries stay longer than the others" (P3, lines 571-576).

Some learners cannot exit the programme as the CCWs have discovered that their status has not changed. As it is, learners struggle to survive on the meal they get at school during break, as well as the one they get at the centre after school. The CCWs advocated for learners to be kept in the programme so that they can get a meal to sustain them on daily basis.

4.3.1.3 Discussions of the findings for Theme 1

It is evident that learners are faced with many adversities and challenges that are detrimental to developing academic resilience. For the purpose of this study, academic resilience was described in Chapter 1 as one's ability to cope, adapt and adjust to scholastic demands despite adversities faced at home and school. According to the participating CCWs, there are factors that are regarded as hindrances to learners' attainment of academic resilience. The CCWs mentioned the learners' feelings of inadequacy about their intellectual abilities, and negative home environments being factors that impact negatively on learners' academic success.

Research shows that people who feel inadequate usually succumb to peer pressure, self-criticism and have low self-esteem as they perceive themselves as failures and believe others view them likewise (Lashbrook, 2000; Martin & Marsh, 2006). Through the services that they offer, these CCWs played an important role in seeing that the learners were not derailed. The CCWs engaged learners in activities such as spelling bees to encourage active participation, peer collaboration and scholastic improvement. They also encouraged learners to focus on their schoolwork when they became distracted or derailed, they also advised parents on topics that they felt parents should be discussing with their children. They sometimes assumed the role of mediators and peacemakers between learners, parents, and the school when there were issues that affected learners. In some cases, they assumed the role of lay counsellors. The CCWs also advocated for learners whose circumstance did not change after six months to be kept in the system. They sometimes further assumed

the role of referral agents as they referred learners to social workers and suggested that learners who were not coping should be referred to special schools.

4.4 THEME 2: FACTORS THAT FOSTER ACADEMIC RESILIENCE

Theme 2 discusses the CCWs' perceptions in relation to what they consider as factors that foster academic resilience. This is the role that CCWs play in supporting the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts. Out of the codes derived from the data, two sub-themes were identified, namely, offering academic and psychosocial support. Table 4.4 outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria that categorised the data in Theme 2.

Table 4.5: Inclusion and exclusion criteria of Theme 2

SUB-THEME	INCLUSION CTRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Academic support	Any reference to support that contributes to learners' academic achievement.	Any reference to any form of support that does not include academic support.
Psychosocial support	Any reference to emotional and social support offered to learners.	Any reference to any form of support that excludes emotional and social support.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 2.1: academic support

These CCWs supported learners educationally, and supported those who were not coping by giving them individualised tutoring to see if there will be any improvement:

> *"We do have slow learners, and those who do not cope in the class. So, we give them one-on-one session to see if there will be any improvement if given individual attention. If we have those children, we can make a follow-up with the teachers to ask them if they have noticed any difference since learners started with this program" (P1, lines 10-15).*

They also followed up with the teachers at school to check if there was any progress since the learners had started to attend the support programme at the centre. They further supported learners educationally by supervising them when doing their homework after school.

"So, we just supervise in order to give learners educational support" (P5, lines 100-101).

The CCWs and the social auxiliary workers functioned as enablers for cooperative learning. They created learning opportunities for learners to engage actively with each other in collaborative learning, sharing ideas and giving each other support.

"If there are children in a group in this class, they are there to participate, to share and to support each other then. That way they learn how to do something, even if it is wrong, in future it will be right" (P3, lines 252-255).

"The kids who are doing well academically so or intellectually so, they somehow motivate one another. I don't have to step in as a care worker to teach them this or teach them that. Automatically, they will say if so and so can do this, then I can do it" (P2, lines 285-289).

The role of CCWs in this case was to create a safe space for collaborative learning and peer mentoring. These CCWs used different extracurricular activities, such as spelling bees, to support learners academically and to encourage active participation.

"When we are doing some activities, if a child is doing well; we encourage them to do more. Also, like yesterday, it was so fun because it was something like spelling bee*. Those children who get high marks, we applaud them" (P1, lines 272-275).*

Children who achieve well academically are given recognition and thus everyone is encouraged to do better and keep focused.

"We tell them if you do more, you will get more. So, we encourage them every time. And because they see others doing it, they also want to get something to do which is better" (P1, lines 276-278).

The CCWs also instilled excellence by encouraging learners to focus on their strengths, capabilities, and skills.

"Focus on what they do better and also focus on what they are able to do" (P2, lines 282-283).

The CCWs assumed the role of being motivators to learners, and helped learners to realise that they were not all the same and that, despite the fact that their parents were unemployed, they would still get a meal a day.

"By motivating the children, I sometimes make them realise that they are not all the same. Because sometimes I give them an example about here, even though their parents are not working but here they have one important meal a day" (P4, lines 224-228).

"One of the things that we do, like participant 4 said, we motivate even if it takes sitting one-on-one with the kid. Make the kids understand how bad the situation at home they always have to remember this, we are always telling them that being born poor was not their choice, but to be poor in the future is going to be their choice" (P2, lines 234-239).

They helped the learners to understand that even though they did not choose the situations in which they found themselves and could not change it, they could still choose to adapt. They advised the learners that they could change their future for the best. They also supported the learners by motivating them, helping them to change their mindset about their unfavourable living conditions, schooling, and academic achievement. Learners were moreover encouraged that despite their circumstances, they could still bring change in their families by doing well academically.

"We always encourage them and motivate them that they could be a change in their families. Because it is possible that today they can go to bed hungry, but if only they can go to school and achieve, they can be academically well, then they can be the change in their family" (P2, lines 239-243).

The CCWs supported learners by helping them to realise that their socio-economic status today does not dictate or determine their future socio-economic status. The CCWs acted as a positive role model to encourage and assure learners that it is possible to succeed amidst all adversities.

"I encourage them despite everything by giving them an example of myself, my manager, the principal and the teacher at school. I always tell them that I was not born a social worker. I went to school; things were not well but here I am. I was still able to take myself to school, even the principal was not born been the principal." (P6, lines 256-261).

They gave learners an assurance that it is possible to succeed academically against all odds, and encouraged the learners to set goals:

"*I always tell them the story that the principal once told me, put it like this, at least they need to set goals"* (*lines 261-263*).

The CCWs assumed the role of advisors, mediators, facilitators, and liaising officers as they worked with the different stakeholders.

> *"Another thing that we do, we also give advice and make referrals. Let's say there is a situation in the family or with the child you give the advice but also, we don't force. We are also working with police stations, SASSA department, social workers that are working in these places." (P1, lines 532-536).*

Even though the CCWs gave advice to learners and their families, they did not impose themselves or their advice, but rather gave learners and their families the freedom to choose whether or not to implement the advice given. The CCWs liaised with other stakeholders, such as the police, SASSA, and social workers to help learners with applying for SASSA and seeing social workers.

They attended the parent meetings, some of them being parents of learners at these schools themselves, however, they found that the learners' parents would share useful information at these meetings that would benefit their programme and all the efforts of the other care workers:

> *"We do attend like some of the time, ¸parent meetings, I go there as a parent to my kid, but what will be discussed in the meeting will benefit everyone even the kids from our programme. So, we come and share to say, 'ok I was at the meeting at Koos Matli, they said this and this and this'" (P4, line 541-544).*

The CCWs sometimes supported learners academically by giving parental advice and support, as well as creating opportunities for parents to interact collaboratively with the centre as indicated by the following quotes:

> *"We even hold parent meetings here at the main centre every quarter. Parents come and interact, we also hear their views because as beneficiaries that we work with, their views are important. They also make suggestions on how we can improve, checking on what we have done wrong for the past three months is also important" (P4, lines 550-556).*

The parents were also found to contribute what they had found to be beneficial in the past. The CCWs created platforms for the community to connect and participate in contributing to improving the services at the centre:

"*We give parents a platform to talk to one another sharing their stories because it is not like they know each other as they come from different sectors of the community. During parents' meetings, that is where they meet and share their values and share about the centre, what their experiences, their strengths are and what they like the most. How the drop-in centre has helped them from different aspects of the community" (P3, lines 289-292).*

The CCWs promoted community networking as they created a platform for parents to meet and share ideas; the meetings also helped to mobilise sponsors and thus garner support for learners' total wellbeing.

"*And that somehow helps us because the client can sometimes come and say, 'I heard so and so say this, I think I can also contribute by doing this so that we can have better children tomorrow'"* (P3, lines 296-299).

"We will also be talking to the parents to say, 'this kind of topics you have to discuss with the kids so that the kids can interact with other kids'. Because these things are being discussed at school, so if they are discussed at school, we might as well discuss them at home" (P2, lines 67-71).

The CCWs offered guidance to the parents, especially guiding them on how to deal with different topics with which the parents were not comfortable.

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2.2: psychosocial support

The CCWs realised that children need emotional support as they meet challenges on different levels:

"I can say we are giving these children emotional support, academic support and nutritional support. We give them emotional support because I have learned that these children face different challenges; at school, at home and also around their peers" (P1, lines 3-7).

They created a safe environment for learners to freely express themselves knowing that what they said would stay between themselves and the CCWs. This way, the learners received proper advice that helped them psychologically and socially, thus enabling them to thrive academically against all odds:

"We somehow give them the platform to share their views because at home they don't have that kind of platform because it seems like at home there are those topics that parents think they can't be discussing with the kids. But with us it is different. We give them that platform and say you can feel free, it stays between us and no one will know" (P2, lines 60-65).

The CCWs gave the learners emotional support by creating a platform for learners to talk about issues that were regarded as taboo by their parents. The CCWs also supported learners by offering them skills training.

"Most of the time, we use tools like support groups in the centre… (line 138-142) [emphasis added]. Some of them do bullying unaware that it is bullying, we are also being helped by student occupational therapists from the University of Pretoria, who are also doing those support groups with children addressing social issues" (P4, lines 134-135).

A support group was another tool that the CCWs used for behavioural modification to support learners' social wellbeing. Occupational therapists from the University of Pretoria who worked in collaboration with the centre also gave learners better options on how to solve problems instead of bullying.

"Another thing that I can say is play therapy. We can say it is a play session, but it is also a therapy because we can identify those children who are bullying one another or those who are quite so that we know which ones we must deal with accordingly" (P2, lines 143-147).

The CCWs thus used play therapy to support learners' psychological wellbeing. Their perception was that during play, children are free and that makes it easier to pick up any behaviour that is unbecoming, such as bullying. Play therapy also helped the CCWs to identify learners who needed serious intervention and behavioural modification.

"The other thing when doing psychosocial support, we don't only focus on the kids. We look at the family background and also do lay counselling for the family if we find that they need counselling because it would be of no use if we only deal with the child psychologically. Then the child will be going back to that household whereby he/she will find the situation putting him back where he was" (P3, lines 155-159).

The social worker and auxiliary workers who formed part of the CCWs' centre offered lay counselling and family counselling to all family members as they understood that counselling learners alone would not help if the home situation went unimproved. To promote learners' total wellbeing, they thus also attended to the home environment.

> *"With psychosocial support, we support the child psychologically, we check emotionally the behaviour of the child. What causes the child to behave like that psychologically and socially, how he socialises with other children. Is she free to socialise or to play which is socially, to express themselves and then how they behave emotionally? Is she sad or happy, or is she free like other children?" (P7, lines 173-179).*

The CCWs supported the learners' emotional wellbeing by checking their behaviour, how they related to each other during play time, and how the learners expressed themselves. They further supported learners' emotional wellbeing by monitoring if they were happy or sad so that they could do follow ups with the families, as it was mentioned earlier that they supported learners as well as their families.

> *"Psychosocial support is a service that we render to individuals and families, supporting them socially and psychologically" (P8, lines 183-185).*

Participant 8, who was a social auxiliary worker, emphasised the fact that they offered social support to individual learners and their families:

> *"In the support groups, we help the children to stand for themselves, we help the children to learn to participate, to learn that to say something that is wrong is not completely wrong, we are learning, we have to do something in order to do corrections in the future" (P3, lines 247-251).*

The social workers at the centre also supported learners psychosocially by training them on how to stand up for themselves and also how to work cooperatively within a group. They did this by creating learning opportunities and a safe learning space for learners to participate. The leaners were encouraged to participate freely without any fear of making errors; this way, they got enough practice and became better at expressing themselves, and gained self-confidence for the future.

The social workers and CCWs supported learners by instilling a spirit of sharing, supporting each other, and active participation.

"*So, if there are children in a group in this class, they are there to participate, to share and to support each other. Then, that way, they learn how to do something, even if it is wrong, in future it will be right" (P3, lines 252-255).*

These learners became able to learn by observing their peers, and learnt both the right and wrong ways of doing things. The CCWs created a platform for cooperative learners. Moreover, and crucially, the learners knew that they had support 24/7 if they wanted to talk about anything:

"One thing that we do most of the time, we avail ourselves, we don't look if it is the weekend, the night, whether is it overtime or not we avail ourselves. We let them know that I am here, if you wanna talk, you can just like say anything or ask anything I am here" (P2, lines 514-518).

The CCWs supported the total wellbeing of learners, and helped learners with behavioural modification as some needed support in that respect:

"We also give them emotional support as well as educational support. Some of these children need support and behavioural modification. If you do not take that into consideration, it also affect the wellbeing of a child" (P1, lines 490-493).

4.4.3 Discussion of the findings for Theme 2

To support the learners academically, the CCWs supervised learners when doing their homework at the centre as they would come after school. They motivated the learners by using themselves as role models, encouraging learners not to despise themselves because of their background. The learners were made to understand that people do not choose their background, but through hard work, they can change for the better. The learners were encouraged to work hard and keep themselves focused in order to achieve academic excellence or succeed educationally. Together with the social workers working at the centre, the CCWs created learning opportunities where learners participated freely while interacting and learning from their peers, developing good interpersonal skills as well. Good behaviour and academic excellence was reinforced and rewarded to motivate all learners. The social workers and CCWs provided counselling to learners, with the social workers doing family counselling when the need arose, thus supporting them emotionally and socially. The CCWs also

gave advice to learners and their families, however, they did not impose themselves or their advice on the learners and their families with whom they worked. In addition to giving advice, the CCWs made referrals for learners who were not coping in a normal school setting. The CCWs conducted their own parent meetings at the centre, which proved to be profitable as the parents would share their experiences and ideas that could make the centre better. They also further liaised with stakeholders, such as SASSA, the police, and home affairs to make learners' lives easier; meaning that neither learners nor their families would have to stand in long queues at the SASSA offices, the police station or home affairs.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I presented the results and supported them with quotes from the discussion with the participants. In the following chapter, I will present the conclusions reached based on the research findings presented here. This will also be used to answer the research questions that guided this study. The chapter will also present possible contributions and recommendations for future research in this field.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I presented the findings of this study according to the themes and sub-themes that arose during data analysis. In this chapter, I present an overview of the previous chapters and revisit the conceptual framework of this study. In the process, I will be answering the main research question and sub-questions, as well as checking my assumptions against the outcome of the data analysis. I will then present the potential contributions and limitations of this study. Finally, I will present possible recommendations for future research endeavours and to further guide CCWs' support.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS

5.2.1 Chapter 1

In the first chapter, I presented an introduction to, as well as the rationale of this study. I explained the purpose of this study, namely, to investigate, explore and describe how CCWs can support the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts. Furthermore, I described the primary research question as well as the sub-questions, and described key concepts that clarify academic resilience and the role that CCWs play to foster academic resilience in learners from low socio-economic contexts. I also presented an overview of the methodology, paradigm and research design used in this study, and finally presented the ethical guidelines followed.

5.2.2 Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature related to this topic. Most of the aspects included different perspectives of resilience; academic resilience; risk factors inhibiting the attainment of academic resilience in South Africa and globally; and protective factors that foster academic resilience, especially among South Africans in low socio-economic contexts. I furthermore discussed the conceptual framework that guided this study.

5.2.3 Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, I provided a detailed discussion explaining my reasons for choosing the methodology applied in this study. I used qualitative research methodology, adopted an interpretive stance, and utilised a case study design. I further described the study in terms of data collection, data analysis methods and interpretation of the data. I described the participants and gave a full overview of the details of the research site. I then lastly described the rigour of the study.

5.2.4 Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, I discussed the research findings and how I arrived at the derived themes and sub-themes. I also interpreted the findings briefly by including a short discussion below each theme to explore the role of CCWs, which will further be discussed in detail in this chapter.

5.3 REVISITING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

According to Ungar (2006), resilience was previously viewed as an innate personality trait within an individual, and so was academic resilience. Lately, the definition has been revised, and resilience is now defined as a mutual exchange between individuals and their environment (Jefferis, 2016). Resilience is defined as individuals' capacity to make positive adjustments towards supportive social ecologies (Jefferis, 2016). Consequently, academic resilience would mean learners capacity to access available resources provided by CCWs to thrive academically. Furthermore, Ungar (2012) suggests that resilient people are able to endure and defy unpleasant circumstances. Within individuals' contexts there are risk factors that hinder academic resilience, as well as protective factors that promote it (Ungar, 2011). However, learners' ability to thrive is not dependent on individual traits, but rather on how individuals make use of the resilience-promoting resources within their social ecologies. Academic resilient learners will therefore succeed academically by navigating towards the available resources despite the stressors faced both at home and at school (Bryan, 2005). In this study, the participating CCWs gave learners academic and psychosocial support. Learners' ability to thrive is therefore dependent on how meaningful the provided

services are and whether they make good use of them to thrive and remain competent. The academic and psychosocial support offered by the CCWs are looked at below through the lens of Social Ecology Resilience Theory. Resilient learners are expected to remain competent behaviourally, psychologically, and academically, even in the face of adversity (Pan & Chan, 2007). Ungar (2011) has proposed four principles that could help us to understand resilience, which are: decentrality; complexity; atypicality; and cultural relativity.

Figure 5.1 below shows how different learners from low socio-economic contexts at Matimba/Sinqobile used different pathways to thrive academically amidst the stressors with which they were faced, as detailed in the interview with the participating CCWs.

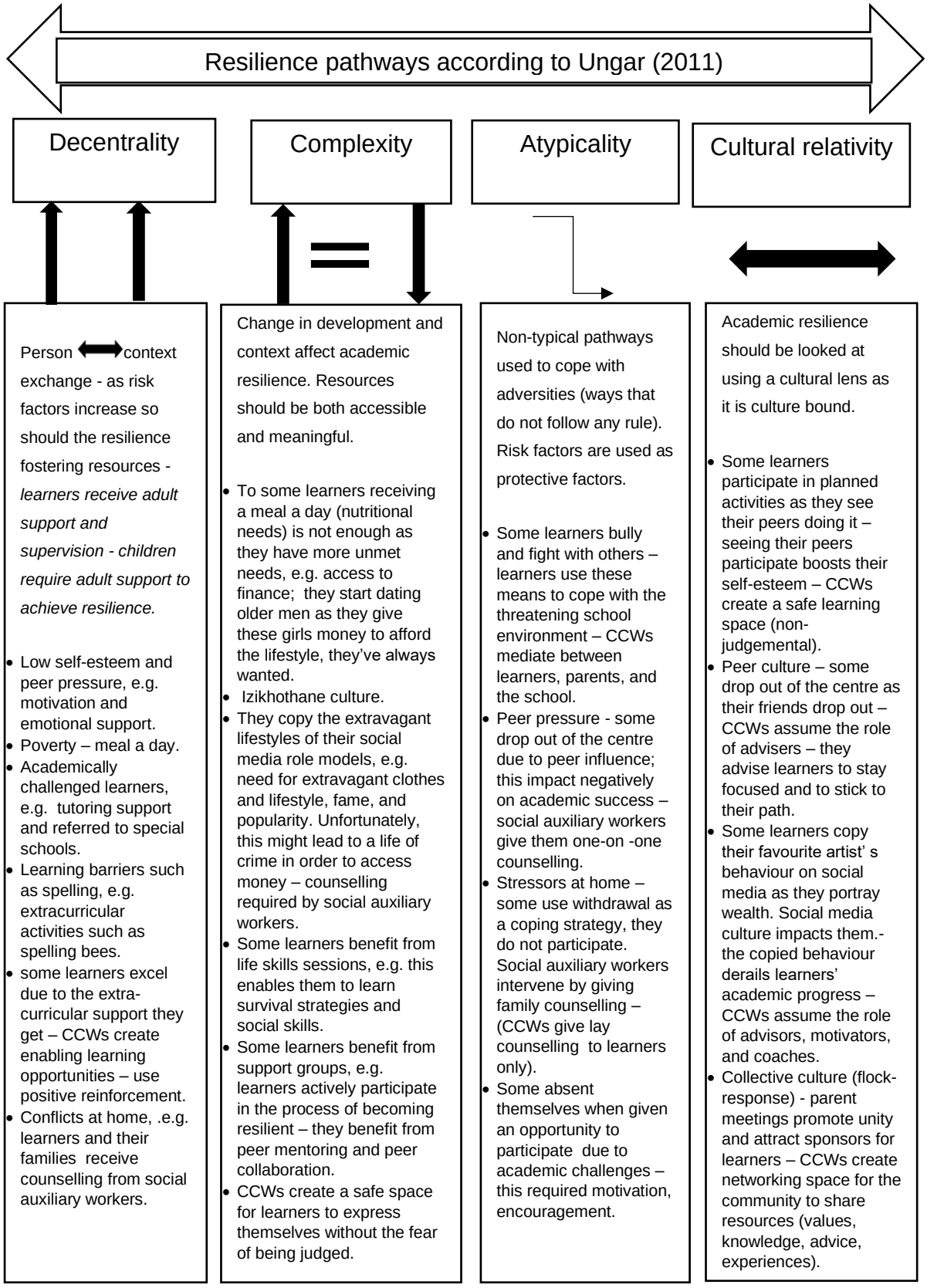

Figure 5.1: Resilience pathways that learners at Matimba/Sinqobile use to gain academic resilience

Decentrality brings to light the fact that resilience should not be understood as an individual's personal dispositions or traits only as it happens when individuals engage meaningfully with their environment (Jefferis, 2016). Jefferis (2016, p. 4) explains resilience as a "person context exchange". Individuals should therefore be looked at as active participants in the resilience process rather than as being determinants. This principle posits that for individuals to resile as the risks increase, the social ecology should provide resilience-promoting resources to counteract the risks (Ungar *et al.*, 2015). In this research, the participating CCWs mentioned numerous adversities with learners are faced such as low self-esteem, peer group pressure, negative behavioural change, academic challenges, low SES backgrounds, poverty, and conflict at home. The findings of this study support the principles as indicated by Ungar (2011). As shown in Figure 5.1 under the principle of decentrality, due to the status quo concerning learners' low socio-economic status, CCWs provide academic resilience-promoting resources/contexts to help learners thrive. CCWs offer learners meals, supervise them with homework, give individualised support for learners who need extra attention, as well as supporting learners who have difficulties in specific areas of learning such as spelling. Social auxiliary workers who work as CCWs support learners emotionally by offering family counselling to both learners and their families. For academic resilience to happen, learners need to take full advantage of the services that their social ecologies offer, this is what decentrality means in terms of person-context exchange. According to Ungar (2008), academically resilient learners are those who respond positively by using the psychosocial resources at their disposal, such as positive self-esteem, a sense of attachment, accessing health care and schooling and opportunities to display their talents to others (Ungar, 2008). Remaining competent in the midst of adversity is central in academic resilience.

The principle of complexity indicates that as people develop and their environment changes, what used to foster resilient at one point in time might not foster it at another point (Jefferis, 2016). The process of gaining resilience is therefore complex. It not only depends on the availability of resources, but these resources should also be meaningful and supportive to be effective (Ungar, 2011). The participating CCWs' expressions supported this notion. Receiving a meal a day at the centre was sufficient

to satisfy the learners' nutritional needs and sate their hunger. However, there were other needs that were not provided for at the centre that required access to money. Unfortunately, when such yearnings develop, learners look elsewhere to meet such needs. Some learners have an increased need for love, acceptance by peers, and money and thus either date older men or adopt izikhothane culture. Unfortunately, some of these behaviours may lead to a life of crime in order to access money. This explains the complexity of the resilience process as indicated previously that when individuals grow, their context of development expands, their needs also increase and what fostered resilience before might become irrelevant or insufficient, more is needed (Ungar, 2011). Some learners benefit from the extracurricular activities offered at the centre such as spelling bees. However, while some excelled at it, others did not derive any value from such activities and, as a result, absented themselves to avoid participating. This supports the outcomes of the literature reviewed, which states that resilient behaviour should be viewed in context. Damalos (2019) states that not all children who have access to resources will necessarily attain academic resilience. In light of this, Van Rensburg (2014) states that, for example, with children living at the same shelter, some might use the services of a social worker when facing challenges due to the positive experience they associate with these services while others may navigate towards pastoral help. This is called equifinality, multiple beginnings resulting in multiple outcomes. Learners enter the centre differently but all with the same purpose - to have access to resources that promote academic resilience.

Ungar (2011) describes atypicality as non-typical pathways that people use to cope with adversities. Atypicality focuses on the academic resilience process rather than on individuals. What is understood as a risk factor may actually serve as a protective factor in some instances. This was found to be the case in this study. Some learners at Matimba/Sinqobile were found to use what could be considered risk factors as coping mechanisms. Jefferis (2016) and Ungar (2011) state that individuals who find themselves in hostile situations sometimes resort to coping strategies that are considered maladaptive and are not socially and lawfully acceptable. Lying to protect themselves from being caught by the police and stealing money are atypical behaviours that were found to be used by underprivileged children in South Africa

(Malindi & Theron, 2010). Some learners view challenges as permanent, which causes make them to feel like victims and like they are being rejected by their peers, leading to aggression and retaliation (Dweck, 2012). According to Herman (2012), how learners view challenges determines how they react to them - viewing them negatively magnifies them, while viewing them positively promotes resilience. In this study, bullying others (which serves as a maladaptive strategy used to cope) and dropping out are examples of atypical pathways that some learners use to cope with environmental stressors. Some absent themselves from the centre when given work to do, thus they cope by avoiding responsibilities. Some become withdrawn and do not participate as expected due to stressors at home. Girls who have experienced bullying at school, meaning that they felt unsafe as their teachers did not protect them, often resort to absenting themselves from school. This behaviour is not desirable, yet it protects these girls from a risky situation (Jefferis, 2016). None of these mechanisms are considered as being resilience strategies, but rather maladaptive strategies used by learners to cope with their stressors. However, these cannot be seen to lead to resilience as resilience is not about avoidance and succumbing to stressors; instead, resilience is about overcoming adversity and succeeding in spite of exposure to multiple adversities.

In light of this, Mampane and Bouwer (2006) postulate that instead of developing maladaptive behaviour, thus being in denial, resilient children accept their situation and find ways to overcome or rise above their negative circumstances. Learners could choose a positive mindset towards adverse conditions, which is crucial for their success, both academically and in life (Herman, 2012). Resilience is not static, it is a process, which indicates that there will be ups and downs in the process of gaining resilience. Similarly with academic resilience, ups and downs are expected.

Van Rensburg (2014) emphasises the importance of culture in defining any form of resilience, academic resilience should therefore be looked at using a cultural lens. Furthermore, “resilience is predicted by both the capacity of individuals and, the capacity of the social and physical ecologies to facilitate their coping in a culturally meaningful way” (Ungar, 2015, p. 4). Low socio-economic status is considered detrimental to academic resilience. In contrast with this, the findings of this study have

highlighted the warm supportive relationship that learners have with the CCWs and the safe environment at the centre, which serve as a building block for academic resilience. Warm interpersonal relationships breed positive outcomes as they teach individuals to better understand themselves, others, the environment, and how to relate (Martin, Marsh, McInerney & Green, 2009). Furthermore, warm and supportive interpersonal relationships have been found to act as protective factors that are good prompters of academic resilience and a positive outlook on education (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). These relationships serve as social support for learners and thus stabilise stressful circumstances, serving as protective factors against the risks at hand (Malecki & Demarey, 2006).

Although parents find it difficult to communicate with their children about certain topics as it is considered taboo in their culture, the learners at the centre thrive as they have an open communication policy with the CCWs. The support groups and play therapy that the participating social auxiliary workers used during counselling encouraged peer collaboration. This in turn promoted active participation, peer culture and a culture of learning. The supportive engagement of peers fostered academic resilience by providing non-threatening spaces. Collective parent meetings at the centre promoted a sense of collectivity, unity and a sense of belonging, which promoted the learners' emotional wellbeing. Ebersöhn (2012)) calls this a 'flock response', referring to the joint efforts of accessing, mobilising and sustaining resources to counteract the risk factors at play. Additionally, the partnerships that families, schools, and communities form are regarded as protective factors that foster learners' academic resilience (Bernard, 1995; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 2001). The findings reveal that it is in the meetings at the centre that sponsors were attracted, and parents and community members also shared valuable ideas that promoted academic resilience. Family-school-community partnerships have contributed immensely as protective factors that help learners, especially those from low SES contexts, to overcome their learning difficulties and the risks posed thereby (Bryan, 2005). Partners working collaboratively facilitate and coordinate the implementation of programmes aimed at increasing the psychological, academic, and social aspects of learners to enhance academic resilience (Beveridge, 2013). Family-school-community partnerships also

grant learners opportunities to form meaningful bonds with experienced adults, and develop problem-solving and prosocial skills (Bryan & Henry, 2012). This was observed in this study.

5.4 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Figure 5.2 is a schematic representation of the research findings, answering the two secondary questions and the primary research question. The figure is further discussed in detail in Sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2.

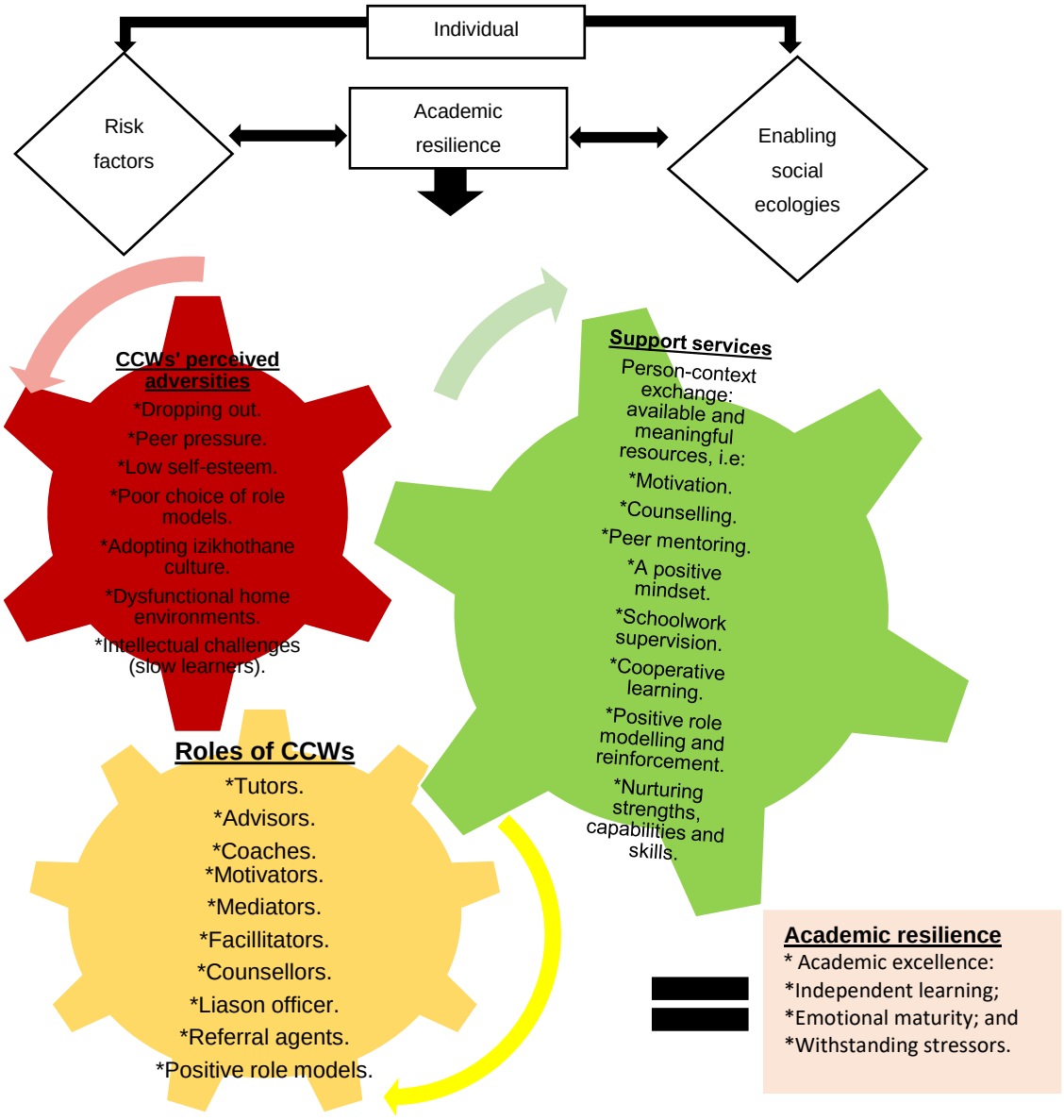

Figure 5.2: Schematic representation of the findings answering both the primary and secondary questions

The reviewed research posits that for academic resilience to happen, there must be risk factors. It further shows that for people to resile, there must be accessible and meaningful resources available. The findings of this study have shown different risk factors with which the learners at Matimba/Sinqobile are faced, as listed below. It has further shown that most learners thrive academically despite those risk factors due to the support that CCWs offer them, as listed in the figure above.

5.4.1 Addressing Secondary Question 1: what forms of support can improve the learners' academic resilience?

According to Herber and Johnston (2013), CCWs form part of the multidisciplinary team that provides care to people who need physical, social, emotional, and financial support. The researchers stipulate that despite the great contribution that CCWs are making, there seems to be little research about their role. The findings of this study confirmed and added to Herber and Johnston's contributions, showing that CCWs promote academic resilience by giving learners academic, social and emotional support, as highlighted below. According to Social Ecological Resilience Theory, resilience is a complex process that is dependent on individual development and supportive social interactions (Ungar, 2011). Consequently, resilience should be looked at within specific contexts as it is context bound. As individuals and contexts change, so will resilient behaviour (Jefferis, 2016). The findings of this study revealed the CCWs' supportive services through one theme, namely, 'factors that foster academic resilience' with two sub-themes, academic and psychosocial support. These were identified as positive contributors towards developing academic resilience. The learners at the centre were afforded opportunities for academic, social, personal, recreational, and cultural development (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

5.4.1.1 Academic support

Academic support was mentioned as one of the services that the CCWs found to minimise risk and promote academic resilience. The CCWs supervised learners when doing schoolwork after school. Their supportive interactions during homework supervision promoted academic resilience. The programme serves as a support system to learners whose parents are not competent to help them with homework,

provide them with nutritious food, or with social and personal skills development (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). The CCWs identified problem areas such as spelling, and used extracurricular activities such as spelling bees to intervene and create a non-threatening, enabling environment for the development of academic resilience. The spelling bee promoted active participation. Active participation influences learners to adapt, and thus promotes academic resilience (Shole, 2017). It also promotes peer mentoring, which in turn boosts learners' self-esteem as low self-esteem was highlighted as one of the factors that hinders the development of academic resilience. Giving individualised attention (one-on-one tutoring sessions) to learners who seemed to be struggling was also found to be beneficial by the CCWs as it creates a non-threatening environment. The CCWs acted as enablers of cooperative learning. They also influenced learners by acting as positive role models, thus encouraging a positive outlook on learning. Supportive mentors, social support, emotional regulation, and peer acceptance are considered to be promoters of academic resilience (Benzies & Mychasuik, 2008). The social auxiliary workers at the centre recommend to parents to send learners who were struggling (academically challenged learners) to special schools where they would benefit and possibly thrive. These referrals, if followed, served as an enabling agent as these learners were put in spaces where resilience-promoting resources were not only available but were also meaningful in meeting their special needs. This fosters academic resilience as learners do not have to stay in mainstream schools where they feel inadequate as their needs are not met, which ends up usually discouraging them. The CCWs also acted as facilitators, mediators and liaison officers as they worked with the different stakeholders supporting the centre. They played the role of being pseudo-parents to the learners for whom they were responsible, even going so far as to attend parent meetings at the learners' schools. Thus, they assess learners' social and emotional learning behaviour to see how they can support not only learners, but also families at large by intervening in the situations at home.

Academic resilience is seen as an important enabler in any intervention, and helps learners deal with adversity, stressors, and pressure in educational settings (Martin & Marsh, 2006).

5.4.1.2 Psychosocial support

Studies have shown that positive, caring, and meaningful relationships foster academic resilience (Shole, 2017). The findings of this study revealed that the positive caring relationships between the learners and the CCWs promoted academic resilience as it cushioned the learners' emotions. These relationships served as social support to the learners and thus stabilised the stressful circumstances they found themselves in, serving as protective factors against the risks at hand (Malecki & Demarey, 2006). Consistent motivation and positive reinforcement encourage learners to participate freely. On the contrary, poor school motivation, bad attitudes, and failure threaten academic resilience (Marteniz *et al.*, 2014). Adults being a positive role model contributes by influencing learners to have a positive outlook on the future. Adults who have a relationship with learners serve as role models who model good behaviour, thus buffering risks and promoting resilient behaviour (Gunnestad, 2006). Warm and supportive interpersonal relationships have been found to act as protective factors that are good prompters of academic resilience and a positive outlook on education (Schaefer-McDaniel, 2004). Learners are given hope as they are reminded that the present socio-economic context does not dictate their future, thus learners are encouraged by learning that success is possible. Hope, which has been found to be contributory to resilience, is defined as a mental process that uses pathway and agency-based thinking that is goal directed (Celik, Cetin & Tutkun, 2015). Consequently, individuals who succeed in life are those who are goal directed in whatever they seek to achieve (Celik, Cetin & Tutkun, 2014).

Positive relationships and the warm support of adults were found to be important in learners flourishing academically (Shole, 2017). The participating CCWs' caring relationships fostered a trusting and secure environment for these learners, who had challenges at home. The learners knew that they could speak to the CCWs about anything as they maintained confidentiality, reducing the learners' burden as they no longer had to suffer in silence. Psychosocial support was also found to be a predictor of academic resilience by the CCWs. They therefore supported learners psychologically and socially by offering individual and family counselling (this was done by social auxiliary workers). The learners felt free to express themselves in the

non-judgemental space created during counselling sessions. Listening to learners, giving them individual attention, calling them by their names, showing them respect, and creating a non-threatening environment where learners could freely express themselves were demonstrated by the CCWs accounts (Brooks, 2006). Play therapy and support groups were also found to be useful tools as the learners were observed in a natural setting to see how they interacted with their peers and the environment. Peer relationships are significant as they promote companionship, friendships and having playmates (Shole, 2017). In this study, peer relationships were found to promote peer mentoring, which was found to a source of encouragement and support. Furthermore, the activities were found to be meaningful as they enabled the CCWs to see learners who needed more specialised attention and support, such as being referred to social workers. Creating networking platforms for learners, their parents and the community were found to not only benefit learners, it also benefitted the whole community as members were afforded opportunities to share valuable ideas and attract sponsors, which helps better the lives of the learners and better the services offered at the centre.

5.4.2 Addressing Secondary Question 2: what are the CCWS' perceptions of the academic adversities faced by learners from low SES backgrounds?

Social Ecological Resilience Theory posits that there should be an exchange between individuals and their social ecologies for them to thrive and withstand adversities (Ungar, 2011). Furthermore, resources should also be accessible and meaningful for individuals to resile (Jefferis, 2016). The principle of atypicality, however, states that sometimes individuals use methods that are not lawful as defence mechanisms, even though these may be beneficial to them; they therefore use risk factors to cope with adversity. The findings of this study revealed learners' feelings of inadequacy about their intellectual abilities, and highlighted their negative home environments as factors that the CCWs perceived as adversities inhibiting academic resilience.

5.4.3 Feelings of inadequacy about intellectual abilities

The study revealed low self-esteem as an adversity inhibiting academic resilience. Self-esteem is defined as a positive or negative attitude towards oneself (Mao, Yang,

Bonaiuto, Ma & Hermat, 2020). It increases one's self-worth and increases the chance for one's happiness, as well as the ability to cope with life's disappointments (Mai *et al.*, 2020). Academic reliance is therefore highly correlated with self-esteem. Individuals with low self-esteem usually struggle with an identity crisis; they doubt themselves, which makes it difficult for them to cope with adversities (Celik, Cetin & Tutkun, 2015). In this study, low self-esteem was identified as preventing learners from taking full advantage of the support given and thus it was discovered that learners are deprived from full participation in activities planned to support them academically. The reason behind this non-participation is self-doubt and feelings of insufficiency. Learners thus resort to not expressing themselves. The performance of learners with low self-esteem was found to be poorer as they felt uncomfortable, afraid and frustrated in class, impacting their academic achievement negatively (Al-Hebaish, 2012). Low self-esteem leads to feelings of anxiety, especially when faced with challenging tasks, which usually interferes with learners' academic success, sense of peace, as well as the ability to take advantage of any given learning opportunities (Lasbrook, 2000; Martin & Marsh, 2006). Most learners who show avoidant behaviour seem to be academically challenged.

Being academically challenged is therefore also seen as a hindrance to learners achieving academic resilience. Furthermore, learners who are academically challenged seem to feel uncomfortable participating and expressing themselves when given platforms to participate, and thus suffer academically. School enjoyment, classroom participation and general self-esteem were noted as strong predictors of academic resilience (Martin & Marsh, 2006).

Peer pressure was also perceived as a hindrance as learners resort to adopting unbecoming behaviour from their peers in order to be accepted. Some adopt izikhothane culture to cope, which is where a mob of people battle one another and throw food at each other, as well as burning and otherwise damaging hard-earned goods to present a false sense of abundance (Mnisi, 2015). The acts done as part of izikhothane are not part of any protest or the advertisement of goods, but are done for validation of their extravagance by their peers (Mnisi, 2015). It also entails preoccupation and obsession with pricey, materialistic objects such as clothes and

liquor, which are used to show off extravagance and wealth (Mchunu, 2016). The motive behind izikhothane-based actions is to remove attention from the fact that they are from poor backgrounds. This is done by gaining popularity and respect from their peers (Mchunu, 2016). The money used to buy the goods is either saved pocket money, money earned from part-time jobs, or sometimes from unsuspecting parents who work hard to support their children (Mnisi, 2015).

The CCWs' perception was that learners' behaviour was affected and influenced by their favourite artists, who they followed on social media. Learners are therefore impressed and taken with the material objects and having a fancy lifestyle, which they see on social media. Consequently, what learners are exposed to on social media impacts negatively on their behaviour and their lives in totality. This is regrettable as they try to compensate for their feelings of inadequacy. People with low self-esteem are thus more likely to copy excessive antisocial behaviour from the media to avoid negative feedback from others or to cope with their adverse situations (Mao *et al.*, 2020).

5.4.3.1 Negative home environments impact learners negatively

Negative family circumstances were also found to impact learners' academic resilience negatively. According to Benzies and Mychasiuk (2008), certain family characteristics, such as small families and the presence of both parents, were found to be good, protective factors against stressors. A good relationship and communication between parents provides stability for children, on the contrary, the opposite was found to be threatening to children's stability (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2008). Furthermore, children from conflicting families were found to be lowly esteemed by their peers (Benzies & Mychasiuk, 2008). The findings of this study revealed that some of the learners were dealing with challenges such as fighting parents; dysfunctional families where there was a confusion of roles, making it difficult for parents to exercise discipline; unsupportive parents who refused to allow their children to be transferred to schools where their potential would be optimised; and families who were struggling financially.

5.4.4 Addressing the primary question: how can CCWs support the academic resilience of learners from a low SES context?

This question was answered by the two sub-themes, namely, by giving academic and psychosocial support to learners. The two themes were derived from the theme 'factors that foster academic resilience'.

The CCWs supported the academic resilience of learners from low SES contexts by supervising their schoolwork, thus assuming a tutoring role. Mampane (2017, p. 133) states that "the after-school programme for children focuses on adult supervision especially after school, creating a routine and rituals though repetitive daily activities such as meal taking rituals, teaching life skills, assisting with homework and engaging in fun activities with children." The CCWs also played the role of being advisors to both learners and their parents by offering learners life skills while advising parents on how to handle topics that they did not feel comfortable discussing. Mampane and Bouwer (2011) mention adult's social and emotional support as key factors in promoting learners' academic resilience. Furthermore, the CCWs played the role of being positive role models, motivators, and influencers who motivated the learners to have a positive outlook on the future. These service providers motivated the children at the centre to be hopeful for the future and to set future goals (Mampane, 2017). The CCWs sometimes assumed the role of a life coach by coaching learners who needed behavioural modification as the learners' change in behaviour disrupted their scholastic and academic performance. For some of the learners who had challenging family circumstances, the CCWs assumed the role of being counsellors (social auxiliary workers), a lifeline and support system. In some instances, the CCWs and auxiliary social workers created learning opportunities and promoted the development of good interpersonal skills by allocating learners to groups. By doing this, they created a collaborative learning space for learners to engage with each other, the environment, and educational pursuits.

Offering psychosocial support, the CCWs acted as agents of change by identifying learners' strength, skills, and nurturing them in order to promote academic resilience and excellence while addressing areas of growth. Acting as facilitators and liaison

officers, the CCWs facilitated and liaised between learners and the different stakeholders, such as SASSA, Home Affairs, the police, and sponsors such as Woolworths. The CCWs promoted community unity and connectedness through their quarterly meetings held at the centre, which is how they lobbied for resources as community members pledged to contribute to the programme. Additionally, these interactions created social capital, which fostered resilience as parents also shared about their problems and how they overcame them. This in turn empowered the centre, the learners, the parents, and the community. These networks also influenced strong values in learners as they aspired their behaviour to be associated with the people they loved and respected, serving as a great motivator towards developing academic resilience (Gunnestad, 2006).

Despite the social and physical challenges that threatened the learners' academic resilience, social capital (caring relationships with care givers who offered learners a sense of security) and human capital (the ability to learn and take part in play) fostered their academic resilience, which is supported by Ungar (2013). These relationships serve as social support for learners and thus stabilise stressful circumstances, serving as protective factors against the risks at hand (Malecki & Demarey, 2006).

Ungar (2008) highlights the importance of culture and what it informs: good parental support, and access to good medical support and education. These may act as a buffer for some children who consider this to be important, while other children may perceive different implications due to cultural differences. This was confirmed to be true by the CCWs' accounts in the interview.

5.5 POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY

The results of this study will add to the body of knowledge about academic resilience. Furthermore, it sheds more light on the role that CCWs play to support academic resilience. It will also guide CCWs who wish to support learners' academic resilience and do not know where to start. This study brings to light both risk and protective factors related to academic resilience and how CCWs can create a balance between the two to promote academic resilience.

5.6 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This was a qualitative study with a limited number of participants. The limitation here might be that the results cannot be generalised to a larger population with a different context. The findings are also context bound; resilience is a complex process that happens within a specific context. Not interviewing the learners and parents is also seen as a limitation of this study. The parents and learners were not included as the study was specifically focused on the role of CCWs. This included not looking at the learners' academic records. Having to go to the research field just before and during the Covid-19 lockdown period was also considered a limitation due to the level of anxiety on the participants' part.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.7.1 Recommendation for collaboration with other stakeholders

After careful consideration of the findings, especially the role that CCWs play to support the academic resilience of learners from low SES contexts, I recommend the following as I believe it will enhance CCWs' services and therefore maximise their valuable contributions:

- Working in collaboration with community members to source academic (graduates who are not employed can volunteer), psychosocial, and financial support to counteract the risk factors as members are already on board.
- Engaging in further lay counselling training for CCWs at organisations such as Lifeline (training is usually done at night and is not costly).
- Further occupational therapist services being provided by University of Pretoria students and students from other universities.
- Peer tutoring.
- Working in collaboration with schools as this will help CCWs on how to approach different aspects, such as spelling, to make their service more effective.

- Collaboration with other departments, such as the Department of Social Welfare, the Department of Education, and the Department of Health for continuous support.

5.7.2 Recommendations for further research

According to the literature reviewed, there is little research concerning the role of CCWs. I recommend longitudinal research on the significance of the role of CCWs in communities, families, and schools. Further to this, I recommend involving families, teachers, and community workers in future studies.

5.8 CONCLUSION AND THE RESEARCH'S REFLECTIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate, explore and describe CCWs' role in supporting the academic resilience of learners from low SES contexts. This purpose was achieved by obtaining data on what the CCWs perceived as risk and protective factors relating to academic resilience. Furthermore, the findings were able to highlight the descriptive role played by CCWs to mitigate risks while promoting academic resilience.

During this study, I also reflected on my own experiences, both as a child and as a teacher working with learners in low SES contexts, Ungar's (2011) Social Ecology of Resilience Theory was proven to be true in both my personal life and the findings of this study. Myself, other learners from my previous school, as well as the learners from Matimba/Sinqobile were able to thrive amidst adversities, including poverty, while others could not. Personally, what helped me to withstand these adversities was the supportive relationships I had with my mother, teachers, and other community members, especially at church. Ungar's (2008) four principles posit that for people to resile, resources should be both accessible and meaningful (decentrality), however, the resilience process is complex (complexity). What fosters academic resilience in one person might not foster it in someone else, now or in the future. The CCWs' supportive role at the centre was found to buffer risks and promote academic resilience. Unfortunately, however, while some learners were seen to thrive

academically, some still used atypical methods of survival along the way, such as dropping out of the centre.

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APPENDIX A

Faculty of Education

Dear Care Worker

Request for permission to participate in my study

I am currently enrolled as a Masters Educational Psychology student at the University of Pretoria. The title of my study is: **Community care workers' role in supporting academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts**. The purpose of the study is to better understand the role of care workers in providing academic support to learners from low socio-economic contexts. In order to collect data for this study, I would like to invite care workers from the Matimba Sinqobile Drop-in centre based in Mamelodi to take part in a one-hour focus group discussion.

The focus group will take place at the centre either before the learners come to the centre or after the learners leave the centre. The discussion will start with an introduction of who we are. Then I will ask all the care givers to discuss their role in supporting academic resilience of learners. After this I will divide the group into smaller groups to further discuss the themes that emerged for further clarification. At the end of the hour I will ask each group to choose two members that I can meet with later. I will arrange a meeting with the two care workers once I have gone through all the data collected. The purpose of the second meeting is for the care workers to give me feedback and check if what I have written is the true reflection of their experience. This meeting should take approximately 30 minutes with each group.

As a researcher I am expected to follow certain ethical codes to protect your rights. Therefore, the activities will be done in a secure room to ensure confidentiality and your participation will be anonymous. If you agree to participate, I ask that you do not tell other people who were not part of the group what was discussed. Your participation

is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your permission at any stage. Should you decide to withdraw all the data collected from you will be excluded from the study. No incentives will be given to participants for taking part in the study. All the data collected will be stored at the University of Pretoria, according to the university's policy.

Should you be willing to participate in this study, kindly sign below to say that you are consenting to voluntarily participate in this study. If you have any questions, concerns or require more information, feel free to contact myself or Professor Mampane listed below.

Thanking you in advance for your participation and support.

Yours Sincerely

Elsie Maimela	Prof Ruth Mampane
Research student	Supervisor
Department of Education Psychology	Dep. of Education Psychology
University of Pretoria	University of Pretoria
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074 448 8565	012 420 2339

Consent to participate in the study: Community care workers' role in supporting the academic resilience of learners from low socio-economic contexts.

Please indicate if you will be participating in this study by ticking the relevant box and return the forms to me as soon as possible. By agreeing to participate you agree that I can audio-record the discussions and that what is said during the discussions will remain confidential.

☐ I give consent to participate in the research project.

☐ I do not give consent to participate in the research project.

……. ……

Printed name of the participant Signature of the participant

…… ……..

Date Cell number

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What are the perceived adversities (risk factors) that are faced by learners towards developing academic resilience? (Scholastically, Emotionally, Socially & Financially.
2. What measures (interventions) have you put in place to help learners adapt/adjust despite unfavourable conditions such as: (Bullying, Absent/busy parents, Scholastic work, Psychological challenges & Social challenges).
3. What contributions have you found to be useful/effective in helping learners overcome/withstand the challenges?
4. What are the unpleasant behaviours(chaos) that violate the rules but never collapse have you identified that learners use towards academic resilience? (complexity) Multiple beginnings resulting in multiple outcomes, socially acceptable ways of coping in different settings depend on what the setting offers.
5. How do you help learners to navigate towards available resources that enhance academic resilience? (decentrality) (quality of neighbourhood, prosocial skills)
6. What are the maladaptive strategies that learners use to cope in hostile situations that are not socially and lawfully acceptable? (atypicality)
7. Which cultural skills/capabilities have you found to be effective in fostering academic resilience? (Cultural relativity)

APPENDIX C

Samples of extracts from the Focus group

1. What are the perceived adversities (risk factors) that are faced by learners towards developing academic resilience? (Scholastically, Emotionally, Socially & Financially).

P1*: The challenge that I can see is that some of these children still have low self-esteem. They can't express themselves even though they know what it takes. The low self-esteem makes the child feel like he/she do not understand.*

P2*: Most of the kids that we are dealing with, they struggle with that; peer pressure, they are trying to adjust to what their peers are doing. So, we try to sit them down and tell them that, that is not how you are supposed to be. Stick to your path and know what you want in life so that you can be a better person tomorrow. Yes, and so behavioural change is a challenging factor because sometimes kids don't attend as they are supposed to be attending because of their friends especially those in high school.*

P3: *And the other challenge that we have is children who are the slow learners.*

P2*: Sometimes we understand that children are affected by challenges at home. Where the parents are fighting the children are affected by the behaviour, they become quiet the don't disclose.*

P1: *some of the children because of the background, it is hectic in that family, they are fighting, children become bullies, they bully others and fight with other children.*

P3: *Parents always deny when you try and tell them that this child needs to be transferred,*

P4: *These children nowadays, they have their own role models, so social media is the most contradicting factor to our children because some of them choose role models from social media which is another thing. Because like seeing may be their favourite song artist in a beautiful fancy car, in this big house, with these beautiful babes, so think that is life.*

P5: *they act as if they are rich even though they are from families that are pulling hard. They defend themselves by saying they are "izikhothane", they have this and that, even though it is difficult for their parents to see that they are not ok. When they arrive at school, they are slow learners and they know that they come from a low-income background they defender themselves by acting like they have.*

P3: *Another maladaptive situation that we face with those children that we are tutoring in their own families is whereby young girls give themselves to older men because they think that man gives me love, he gives me money. Something that the child does not get at home because of that the child feels rejected by the family members.*

P9: *When you go back to the family to check the family background , you will find that the family is dysfunctional and that the father defends the kids, but now he finds that he needs our assistance, so this is a chain each and every child in the family.*

P5: *So, they are able to defend themselves, they act as if they are rich even though they are from families that are pulling hard. They defend themselves by saying they are "izikhothane", they have this and that, even though it is difficult for their parents to see that they are not ok. When they arrive at school, they are slow learners and they know that they come from a low-income background they defender themselves by acting like they have.*

2. **What measures (interventions) have you put in place to help learners adapt/adjust despite unfavourable conditions?**

***P1**: We do have slow learners, and those who do not cope in the class. So, we give them one on one session to see if there will be any improvement if given individual attention. If we have those children, we can make a follow-up with the teachers to ask them if they have noticed any difference since learners started with this program.*

P2: *We somehow give them the platform to share their views because at home they don't have that kind of platform because it seems like at home there are those topics that parents think they can't be discussing with the kids. But with us it is different. We give them that platform and say you can feel free, it stays between us and no one will know.*

***P4:** Most of the time we use tools like support groups in the centre. Some of them do bullying unaware that it is bullying, we are also being helped by student Occupational Therapists from the University of Pretoria, who are also doing those support groups with children addressing social issues.*

***P2:** Another thing that I can say is play therapy.*

***P5**: So, we just supervise in order to give educational support.*
children who get high marks we applaud them.

P1: *I would say we also give them emotional support as well as educational support. Some of these children need support and behavioural modification.*

P7: *With psychosocial support, we support the child psychologically, we check emotionally the behaviour of the child. What causes the child to behave like that psychologically and socially, how he socialises with other children. Is he/she free to socialise or to play which is socially, to express themselves and then how they behave emotionally? Is he/she sad or happy, or is she free like other children? We check the wellbeing of the child.*

P1: *Also, like yesterday it was so fun because it was something like spelling-bee. Those*

3. What contributions have you found to be useful/effective in helping learners overcome/withstand the challenges?

P1*: We also educate parents to go in line with us, so that the child grow in the right manner in the right situation.*

P3: *The other thing when doing psychosocial support, we don't only focus on the kids. We look at the family background and also do lay counselling for the family, if we find that they need counselling because it would be of no use if we only deal with the child psychologically.*

P2: *It also goes to the parents; we give parents a platform to talk to one another sharing their stories because it is not like they know each other as they come from different sectors of the community. During parents' meetings that is where they meet and share their values, the centre, what their experiences are, their strengths and what they like the most. How the drop-in centre has helped them from different aspects of the community.*

P3: *In the support groups we help the children to stand for themselves, we help them to learn to participate. They are there to participate, to share and to support each other, then that way they learn how to do something, even if it is wrong, in future it will be right.*

P1: *And also, when we are doing some activities, if a child is doing well; we encourage them to do more.*

P4: *What Mam is saying is that we encourage them to stop worrying about things that they don't have and appreciate the things that they do have.*

P2: *Focus on what they do better and also focus on what they are able to do.*

P9: *We try and refer to the social worker*

4. What are the unpleasant behaviours(chaos) that violate the rules but never collapse have you identified that learners use to cope? (complexity) Multiple beginnings resulting in multiple outcomes, socially acceptable ways of coping in different settings depend on what the setting offers.

P5: *Children think that when they are older, they don't have to attend with younger children, then drop out of the centre even though they didn't reach 18 years.*

P3: *They feel like this is the life, this is the place which is very wrong because some of them end up doing prostitution, some of them end up moving out of their homes. They do not see even why they should go to school, whereby they can have this man who is giving them money.*

P2: *Yes, and so behavioural change is a challenging factor because sometimes kids don't attend as they are supposed to be attending because of their friends especially those in high school.*

5. How do you help learners to navigate towards available resources that enhance academic resilience? (decentrality) (quality of neighbourhood, prosocial skills).

P2: *We always encourage them and motivate them that they could be a change in their families. Because it is possible that today they can go to bed hungry, but if only they can go to school and achieve, they can be academically well, then they can be the change in their family.*

P4: *I would say by motivating the children. I sometimes make them realise that they are not all the same.*

P2: *One thing that we do most of the time, we avail ourselves, we don't look if it is the weekend, the night, whether is it overtime or not we avail ourselves.*

P1: *Another thing that we do is to give advice and make referrals. Let's say there is a situation in the family or with the child you give the advice but also, we don't force. We are also working with police stations, SASSA department, social workers that are working in these places.*

P4: *We do attend like some of the time, parent meetings, I go there as a parent to my kid, but what will be discussed in the meeting will benefit everyone even the kids from our programme.*

6. What are the maladaptive strategies that learners use to cope in hostile situations that are not socially and lawfully acceptable? (atypicality).

P4: *Sometimes it can be a situation whereby the child scolds and beats others and is also aggressive to them because he thinks it is the only way to get out of the situation.*

7. Which cultural skills/capabilities have you found to be effective in fostering academic resilience? (Cultural relativity).

P2: *During parents' meetings that is where they meet and share their values, the centre, what their experiences are, their strengths and what they like the most. How the drop-in centre has helped them from different aspects of the community.*

P1: *Those children who get high marks we applaud them. We tell them if you do more, you will get more. So, we encourage them every time. And because others see those ones, they also want to get something to do which is better.*

P2: *We deal with the topic depending on what it will be regarding the children and the parents. We will also be talking to the parents to say, this kind of topics you have to discuss with the kids so that the kids can interact with other kids.*