ECOSYSTEMIC FACTORS INFLUENCING THE EXPERIENCE OF FEAR IN YOUNG CHILDREN

by

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DEDICATION

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to my husband Mr. Isaac Fomane Baloyi. I want to thank you for all the care and support displayed throughout my academic journey. Words cannot express my heartfelt gratitude; may God continue to bless your lives and give you strength. I honour and celebrate you, my loving husband.

I also dedicate it to the many teachers and parents who want to support young children in coping with fear.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate ecosystemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children. Through qualitative method, a sample of 12 grade three learners' drawings, 12 parents, three grade three teachers from low socio-economic status, middle socio-economic status and high socio-economic status participated in the study. In this way, the study aimed to compare and investigate whether a particular setting may determine what influence the experience of fear in young children.

I purposefully selected 12 grade three learners' drawings (four from each school) from which each system of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory was illustrated very well and depicted fearful experiences. As such, a multiple case study design was employed to explore and compare what influence fearful experiences among Grade 3 learners from three different socio-economic class. For data collection, I relied on learners' drawings, narratives, informal conversations, audio recordings, semi-structured interviews, field notes and a research journal. I analysed data through thematic inductive analysis.

The results highlighted that negligence; nightmare, domestic violence, bullying, terrifying television programmes, COVID-19, kidnapping and murder are causing fear in young children. The findings suggest that adversities, television content, kidnapping and murder as well as COVID-19 has the negative effects on the well-being of the children causing fears that are not normal for their age group. The persistent exposure to fearful experiences interferes with the ability of the learners to learn effectively in the classroom. Teachers' lack of competencies in supporting learners to cope with fear add to low participation of learners in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need adequate support and training to deal with learners experiencing fear. The contribution of this study is to provide various strategies which can be employed by teachers and parents to support young children to cope with fearful feelings. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest a need for parents to limiting the amount of domestic violence and terrifying television programmes that young children are exposed to, in the home environment. The insights gained from this study will be shared as recommendations with the schools, institutions of higher learning and the DBE. This will be done to highlight what schools can do to support teachers and parents to assist young children to cope with fear and the kinds of capacity-building programmes that will help teachers, social workers and police officers to become partners in education.

Key words: fear; young children; teachers, eco-systemic factors, violence.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	
AIDS	Acquired Immune Diseases Syndrome
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CBD	Central Business District
COVID-19	Coronavirus 2019
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
HIV	Human Immune Virus
ISHP	Integrated School Health Policy
LoLT	Language of Teaching and Learning
SAPS	South African Police Services
SBST	School Based Support Team
SGB	School Governing Body
SIAS	Screening Identification Assessment and Support
WHO	World Health Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction and background to the ecosystemic factors influencing the experiences of fear in young children. South Africa is a country prevalent with various social ills such as unemployment, poverty, violence, and divorce. According to Mathews, Jewkes and Abrahams (2011), these social ills may cause children to experience high levels of insecurity and fear. LoBue and Rakison (2013) define fear as an emotion that young children experience when they find themselves in strange and frightening circumstances beyond their control. These situations include, but are not restricted to, family violence, divorce, parental loss, death, separation anxiety, childhood illness, and food and shelter deprivation. According to Burton and Leoschut (2012), South Africa is regarded as one of the world's most violent countries and has the highest incidence of people living with HIV/AIDS. United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2020) has estimated that almost two million children have lost their parents due to HIV/AIDS-related deaths. Therefore, Sandstrom and Huerta (2013) stated that most South African children live under conditions that expose them to negative emotions, uncertainty, and fear.

In a study conducted by Atmore, Van Niekerk and Ashley-Cooper (2012), they found that children living in disadvantaged communities and low socio-economic backgrounds were often exposed to fear compared to children from middle socio-economic communities. Their findings highlighted parental occupational status, income level per family, and the number of children in the household as contributing factors that exposed young children to fear. Fuzile (2016) mentioned that South Africa is the second most unequal society in the world regarding socio-economic status, compounded by the fact that several children are still struggling to obtain admission to education within a safe and conducive environment.

The effects of a dysfunctional family also contribute to the experiences of fear in young children. Minullina (2018) states that children from dysfunctional families experience numerous fears that are not normal for their age group. Minullina (2018) postulates that children from dysfunctional families are exposed to conflict and violence in their homes. Parents from dysfunctional families show a lack of love and neglect the emotional needs of their children. English, Thompson, White and Wilson (2015) advise that when young children

feel unloved, unwanted, and unworthy in their homes, they experience high levels of fear and insecurity. Abdelhak (2014) agrees that young children need to feel love, security, and a sense of belonging in a conducive home. If this need is not fulfilled at home, children tend to develop the idea that they have no security, which may create feelings of fearfulness and lack of trust towards others. This is in line with the childrens' right that states; young children need protection against maltreatment, negligence, exploitation, and degradation (UNICEF, 2020).

Moreover, most children are exposed to fear by watching television and other media sources daily. The impact of excessive media exposure, particularly television in the case of young children, has also been found to cause fear and insecurities (Cantor, 2012). Furthermore, Evans, Nelson, Porter, Nelson, and Hart (2012) mention that fear may have serious consequences for young childrens' social behaviour resulting in short and long-term effects throughout life. In the same token, Burkhardt, Loxton, Kagee and Ollendick (2012) suggesting that fear is an integral part of insecurity; it is a way of expressing the relationship between the self and the external world. These authors further believe that fear is a psychosomatic and socio-emotional reaction to a threatening situation resulting in feelings of alarm or fright invoked by specific objects or situations and even by the anticipation or thought of that object (Burkhardt et al., 2012).

The effect of being exposed to fear goes further than emotional and developmental problems (Salcuni, Dazzi, Mannarini, Di Riso & Delvecchio, 2015). Fear affects children's understanding of their surroundings and themselves, their understanding of life, its meaning and purpose, opportunities for upcoming pleasure, and ethical growth (Fox & Shonkoff, 2012). Moreover, these authors believe that fear poses threats to the child's personal safety and violates their immediate environment as a safe place. Therefore, the nature and orientation of young children's experiences of fear are significant. The intention of this research study was to explore what young children identify as the cause of fear in their lives.

1.2   RATIONALE

I have been teaching grade one learners for the past seven years. I have learnt from my experience as a teacher and also as a mother of two young boys that fear is a part of most young children's lives. I was exposed to a traumatic experience when my husband was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease. I had trouble providing adequate parenting to my two young boys and caring for my ill husband. My children were exposed to limited parent-

child relationship time and received less attention. This was the most stressful part of my life, as I could not cope with the burdens. This project motivated me to research how distressed parents may influence fearful experiences in young children.

In light of the multiple adversities young South African children are exposed to and the prolonged effect these may have on their life cycle, an in-depth investigation into the experiences of fear, as perceived by children aged eight to nine, needed to be conducted. In this study, I investigated the experience of fear phenomenologically, allowing children to be the main participants and informants. In my literature review on the topic of fear among young children, there was a scarcity of studies with a child-centred approach to fear. Studies that were done had a more theoretical approach (Salcuni et al., 2015); children's voices regarding their experiences of fear were silent. Therefore, the significance of my study was situated in its ability to give South African children a voice to express what makes them fearful. Through children's drawings and narratives, a model of Bronfenbrenner's theory was used to identify the eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children. This study contributes to the existing literature on the factors influencing fear among young children from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem investigated in this study was that South African children are exposed to social ills such as violence, divorce, and neglect, which may cause increased levels of insecurity and fear. Exposure to social ills may interfere with the optimal development of the child. Childhood is the most significant period of growth, where young children should receive love, happiness, protection, and a sense of belonging. However, exposure to various social ills makes South African children experience a lack of love, unworthiness, fear, and insecurities in their childhood. Therefore, Fuzile (2016) concluded that South Africa is the worst country to raise a child between the ages of five and 14. Kalatzkaya (2015) asserts that fear, as a negative emotion, causes long-term behavioural problems. Eggum-Wilkens, Valiente, Swanson and Lemery-Chalfant (2014) add that young children who are exposed to fearful situations are less likely to adapt to their environment, and they are more likely to withdraw themselves from social activities. Thus, through this study, it is envisaged that a programme to equip teachers to assist and support young children experiencing fear would be designed.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIMS, AND OBJECTIVES

The primary and secondary research questions developed for this study focused on the eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children between the ages of eight and nine.

1.4.1 Primary Research Question

How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children?

1.4.2 Secondary Research Questions

- What are the understandings and experiences of fear in young children?
- What strategies do parents use to minimise the experiences of fear in young children?
- How do teachers address the experiences of fear in learners?
- What do young children believe to be solutions to fearful situations; and
- What are the key elements for a teacher training programme to support young learners' experiences of fear?

1.4.3 Research Aims

This study aimed to explore the eco-systemic factors that contributed to young children's experiences of fear.

1.4.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were to:

- Establish what young childrens' understandings and experiences of fearful experiences are
- Determine what strategies parents use to minimise fear in their children
- Explore how teachers address the experiences of fear in learners
- Identify what solutions young children believe in handling fearful situations are; and
- Establish key elements for a programme to equip teachers to support young learners in their experience of fear.

1.5   CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

In this section, I explain the key concepts used in this study, fear, young children, and eco-systemic factors.

1.5.1   Fear

Fear is defined as an "emotional reaction that is provoked by a perceived threat, which causes modification in human brain and organ function, as well as in behaviour" (Kalatzkaya, 2015:2291). Mathew et al. (2011) postulate that fear is a dreadful feeling with a power frequently caused by awareness of hazards and creates fear in the lives of young children. Fear manifests itself in various ways, it may be caused by a threat, or it may appear through discovery. Arbeau, Coplan and Weeks (2010) believe that fear is present in young children who are struggling to communicate with their peers and the social environment around them. Similarly, Kalatzkaya (2015:2291) agrees that fear is an "oppressive feeling used to influence and regulate the change of values, attitudes, and behaviour in young children." Fox and Shonkoff (2012:69) point to the contextualisation of fear when defining it as "a social act that occurs within a cultural matrix". This implies that the external environment also impacts how children experience fear. For the purpose of this study, I also considered fear as an emotion experienced in a specific cultural and political environment that directly impacts the well-being and development of young children.

1.5.2   Young children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) describes the child as an individual under 18 years of age (UNICEF, 2020). Desai (2010) considers childhood to be the foundational period of development, socialisation, and play, whereas Lerner (2005) believes that during this developmental phase, young children influence or are influenced by the immediate family and events that occur in their environment. 'Young children' refers to a child, especially between infancy and youth. Furthermore, Granot and Mayseless (2001) assert that the middle of childhood is nine years of age. The reference to young children in this study are those between the ages of eight and nine years, in grade three, and experiencing fear.

1.5.3   Eco-systemic factors

According to Bronfenbrenner (2005), eco-systemic factors refer to circumstances in a person's development that are influenced by everything in their surrounding environment and social interactions. Eco-systemic factors are established by the dynamic relationships

between individuals and institutions on the different levels of the ecological environment, consisting of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (Lerner, 2005). Young children are directly and indirectly affected by events and circumstances, and environmental influences in which they interact and participate, thus shaping their response to their social context (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In this regard, Guy-Evans (2020) noted that the influences from the social environment play a significant role in shaping the behaviour of young children, from an individual level to the larger context in which they find themselves. Therefore, the behaviour of young children results from an ongoing interaction between environmental influences and inner motivations, which may impact how they experience fear. In this study, eco-systemic factors refer to aspects influencing the interactions and experiences between young children aged eight and nine years and the particular environmental systems in which they find themselves.

1.6   PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

To contextualise this study, a discussion on the fearful experiences of young children needs to be presented. The section begins with an explanation of fear, followed by a discussion on the causes of fear in young children. Lastly, this section discusses the strategies parents and teachers use to minimise fearful experiences among young children.

1.6.1   Explanation of fear in young children

LoBue and Rakison (2013) describe fear as an inborn emotional response that is produced by an awareness of a present threat. In young children, this emotion is prevalent as the stages of growing up may induce fear (e.g., fear of animals) or because children are regularly confronted with circumstances in their environment that cause fearfulness in them (Kiel & Buss, 2011). According to Adolphs (2013:69), fear is considered a "reaction to a specific threatening stimulus, characterised by increased avoidance of a threatening situation, with the response being unreasonable and extensive to the extent that it can interfere with daily life".

1.6.2   Causes of fear in young children

Fear manifests in various ways, depending on the child's developmental stage. Kiel and Buss (2011) argue that fear is influenced by the experience of factors in the environment that are threatening and causing insecurity. According to Kayyal and Widen (2013), children first experience fear based on their imagination, which means that young children's understanding

of fear starts from imaginary causes and later extends to include realistic and natural ones. Furthermore, Boyer and Bergstrom (2011) proposed a cognitive-developmental account, which emphasised that by nine years of age, young children's view of fear involves both realistic and imaginary factors, which increases with age. Childhood is when children are actively exploring their social world in the absence of their caregivers, so it is significant for them to expect and steer clear of circumstances that may cause them fear. This premise is linked to Piaget's (1962) theory when describing the pre-operational (2-7 years) period of development where the child's thoughts are dominated by supernatural thinking, and they cannot distinguish between imagery and what is real. Piaget (1962) indicated that imaginary creatures causing fear in young children are due to a cognitive deficit, which can be regarded as a primitive type of thinking that will ultimately switch to logical and reasoning skills. Children who learn about the reality-first experience can differentiate between realistic and imaginary causes. Still, their increasing imaginative skills make imaginary thinking dominant in their cognitive functioning (Kayyal & Widen, 2015).

The second experience of fear implies the reality-first view, which is the opposite of the first account. Young children's view of fear relates to real creatures they have encountered (e.g., a big dog). These real creatures are followed by the inclusion of a later stage in their thinking processes, which includes imaginary creatures, which also form the basis for pretend play (Kayyal & Widen, 2021). In this regard, Kayyal and Widen (2013) add that young children first need to understand the real world before they can pretend, particularly the causal factors that influence the experiences of fear. Young children may experience the notion of fear in various ways; for instance, they may gain knowledge to fear a hot stove through experiential learning after being burned, by observing peers getting burned, or by learning from others about the dangers of being in contact with a hot stove (Kayyal & Widen, 2021).

The third learning experience is the evolutionary view, which implies that young children's cognitive development becomes readily functional with logical skills. At this stage, young children have acquired flexible and logical skills geared toward danger identification. Danger identification is a type of fear "template" responsive to the child's process of growing up that is specified to detect certain types of information from the social environment (Boyer & Bergstrom, 2011:95).

Kiel and Buss (2011) advise that the integration of the three learning experiences predicts that both realistic and imaginary factors induce the experience of fear in young children.

Kayyal and Widen (2013) argue that previous or existing circumstances trigger most emotions. Still, the prototype of fear is about the future and its negative effect, which causes long-term behavioural problems in young children.

Additionally, Ducasse and Denis (2015) studied the risks of fear, as it may threaten the health and well-being of young children. These authors propose a link between the quantity of fear and the neurotic condition of the child, in which fear may indicate several psychological problems. Fear can be regarded as an unhealthy state of the body, producing other neuropsychiatric diseases that relate to the health of children, which may turn out to be a serious condition if it persists for a lengthy period of time and may even result in a pre-neurotic condition, that in turn can lead to fear neurosis that is a pathological condition.

Ducasse and Denis (2015) report that the most important emotion that stimulates fear in young children is the fear of strangers. On the other hand, Gegieckaite and Kazlauskas (2022) believe that all experiences of fear in young children involve fear of grief bereavement, such as losing a loved one. Ducasse and Denis (2015) agree with Gegieckaite and Kazlauskas (2022). They say that fear of life adversities, such as death and divorce of parents, leads to stressful conditions. This may result in non-typical behaviour that manifests in aggression, deterioration in growth, and well-being problems and can ultimately result in physical pathology, which is linked to psychological problems such as tiredness and sleeping disorders. Mathews et al. (2011) add that the child develops untypical behaviour, such as fearfulness, due to their interaction with their social environment and the experiences of events that cause serious emotional reactions. Therefore, Ducasse and Denis (2015) warn that fearfulness has a negative impact on the child, as this emotion is ongoing and may last for quite an extended period.

1.6.3   Strategies to support young children experiencing fear

This section addresses various strategies parents and teachers use to support young children experiencing fear. This section is made up of two parts, firstly, parents' strategies to minimise fear in young children, and secondly, teachers' strategies to minimise fear in young children.

1.6.3.1   The role of the parents in supporting young children experiencing fear

Parents play a huge role in supporting young children experiencing fear. A study conducted by Hiebert-Murphy, Williams, Mills, Walker, Feldgaier, Warren and Cox (2012) reported that fear in young children might be reduced when parents show empathy and emotional

expression; this includes encouraging their children to talk about their feelings. In other words, parents who express warmth, support, acceptance, and understanding of their children's experiences of negative feelings provide emotional support, which is necessary to cope with fear (Patel, 2019). Gagnon, Huelsman, Reichard, Kidder-Ashley, Griggs, Struby and Bollinger (2014) reckon that parent-child interaction, which is supportive and encouraging, can help young children to cope with fear by acting as a haven for children to return to when experiencing challenging situations. In doing so, the parent's model adaptive coping strategies that promote positive development in young children, such as social skills, social interactions, self-regulation, independence, and security (Baumrind, 2013). Thus, Jabeen, Anis-ul-Haque and Riaz (2013) concede that fearful children need supportive and encouraging parents because elements of this parenting style predict secure attachment, social competence, self-regulation skills, and prosocial behaviour. Therefore, Beato, Pereira and Barros (2017) postulate that parents should provide emotional support, as it is the most effective strategy to assist children in coping with fear.

Moreover, Nozadi, Spinrad, Eisenberg, and Eggum-Wilkens (2015) postulate that young children with fearful temperaments are characterised by high levels of adverse reactions and low self-regulation; thus, parents need to be firm, consistent, and supportive. Newman and Newman (2017) coincide with the previous authors and postulate that fearful children are less likely to have internalising and externalising problems if they are exposed to warm parents.

In the subsequent section, I discuss the role of the teacher in supporting young children experiencing fear.

1.6.3.2   Role of the teachers in supporting children experiencing fear

Teachers play a significant role in supporting young children experiencing fear. Nyborg, Mjelve, Edwards and Crozier (2022) postulate that teachers use social support strategies to help young children experiencing fear. The social support strategies involve structuring classroom activities to increase participation and encouraging children experiencing fear to play with other children, thereby decreasing loneliness (Arbeau et al., 2011). These authors believe that when teachers use social support strategies, including verbal encouragement, expression of warm approval, and positive reinforcement, it helps young children cope with fear they may be experiencing (Arbeau et al., 2011). The use of social support strategies assists young children in coping with fear, as these strategies enhance social skills and problem-solving skills by encouraging children experiencing fear to work collaboratively with

classmates and praising them for appropriate behaviour (Deng, Trainin, Rudasill, Kalutskaya, Wessels, Torquati & Coplan, 2017).

Moreover, Bosacki et al. (2014) believe that teachers must adapt their teaching strategies to suit the needs of young children experiencing fear in the classroom. These authors also argue that using social support strategies should not only encourage participation and contribution but also provide socio-emotional support to young children experiencing fear (Bosacki et al., 2014). In this way, the teacher creates a safe classroom environment where young children experiencing fear are emotionally comfortable. White (2016) agrees that creating a safe learning environment requires teachers to be sensitive and build a trusting relationship with learners experiencing fear. Zhang and Nurmi (2012) confirm that a warm and safe classroom environment with adequate support from a teacher is very effective in reducing young children's fearful emotions.

In the following section, I discuss the theoretical framework that underpinned this study

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The developing child is influenced by several factors in their environment. Therefore, a framework was needed to help understand the relationship between the individual, family, events, and the social context to gain a holistic view of young children's behaviour (Guy-Evans, 2020). Therefore, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory was important in my study as it provided a lens through which to understand the interconnectedness and interactions between young children and their peers, families, and the larger social context within multiple systems. My choice of using Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory was motivated by the need to understand how the family, peers, teachers, and social context influence fearful experiences among young children. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model was found suitable for this study because factors influencing fearful experiences in young children exist within their environment and are connected to each other (Lerner, 2005).

He believed that factors in the surrounding environment affect a person's development, and he divided the layers into the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Therefore, he divided the person's development into levels, with each ecological setting significantly influencing fearful experiences among young children (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). In this way, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory provided a framework to analyse the eco-systemic factors which influence the experiences of fear in young children across the various systems.

Unfortunately, the South African school system has not yet mastered supporting parents with parenting abilities that enable young children to cope with fear. Parent communication and their relationships with young children experiencing fear are also lacking. Teachers also lack the teaching skills to assist young children in coping with fear. Teachers have not yet mastered the skills to communicate and build a trusting relationship with young children experiencing fear. Thus, it became apparent that there is a need for both parents and teachers to engage with each other to assist children.

1.7.1   Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory

The bio-ecological theory is appropriate to understand and explore factors influencing the experience of fear in young South African children within five socially organised systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Kayyal and Widen (2015) believe that children's fears are rooted in various systems within the social context (e.g., peers, family, school, and social issues). Thus, the influences of systemic factors may not be separated from the challenges of addressing the different socio-economic status groups, social issues, and children's fears, mainly within a developing country like South Africa. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological theory assisted in identifying the protective measures, resources, and strategies that teachers and parents can utilise to support young children experiencing fear in their lives.

Figure 1-1 visually represents the various layers of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory. These five layers are discussed below for a further understanding of the influential and interacting systems.
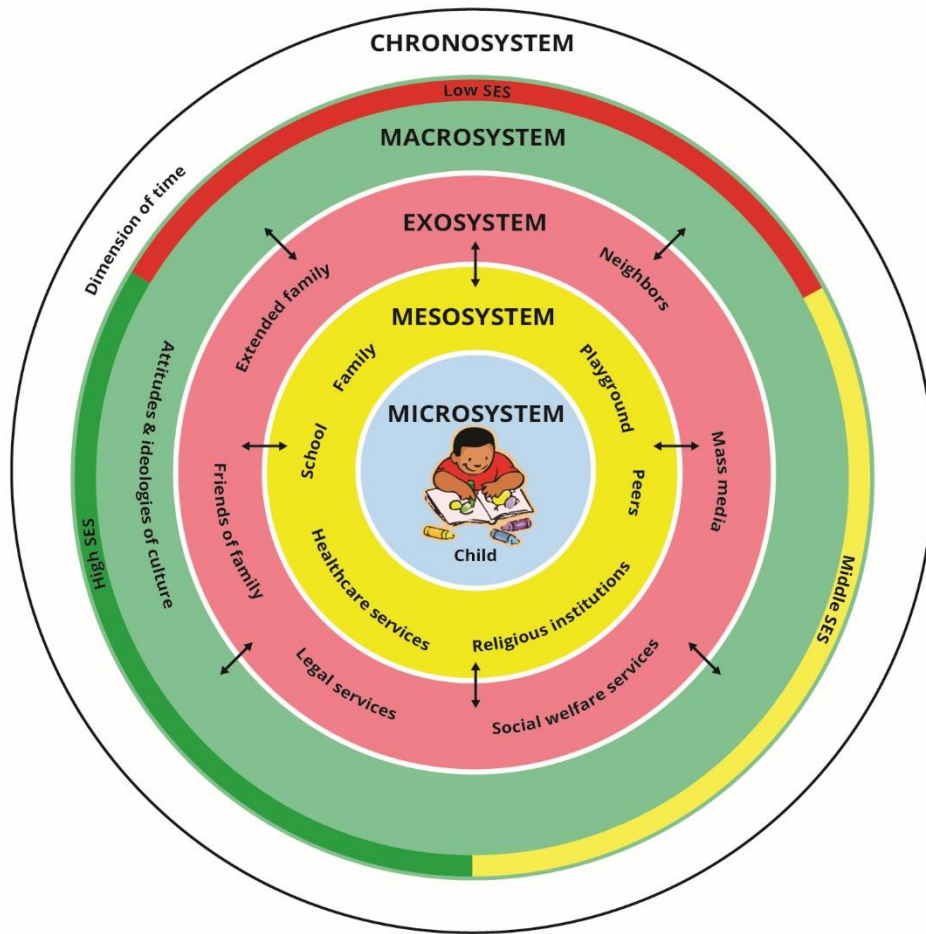
Figure 0-1: Various systems of the bio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

1.7.1.1 The microsystem

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) identified the microsystem as the most important setting since it is the immediate environment in which children spend quality time, including direct face-to-face interaction with family, school, and peer groups. In this study, the microsystem focused on the support parents/caregivers and siblings gave to young children experiencing fear.

1.7.1.2   The mesosystem

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998:35) defined the mesosystem as a "system of microsystems", which involves the interaction between the various microsystems. This level played a significant role in the child's well-being and the support that teachers and peers provided to the young child experiencing fear.

1.7.1.3   The exosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) conceptualised the exosystem as one or more settings where the developing child does not participate but may be affected by what is happening in that setting. Lerner (2005) argues that circumstances like the parent's workplace do not involve the developing child directly. Still, suppose the parent is faced with retrenchment, too much workload, stress, or unemployment. In that case, it may negatively influence the relationship between the parent and the quality time spent with the child. The exosystem comprises police, social workers, and local community organisation support.

1.7.1.4   The macrosystem

The macrosystem refers to the economic structure, beliefs, values, attitudes, and ideologies in which the microsystem, the mesosystem, and the exosystem are all embedded and where development occurs (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2010; Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). Although this level is distal from the environmental influences, it represents the system in which we live and indirectly affects the child and interactions at all other levels. In this study, the macrosystem involved the laws and educational policies that support young children experiencing fear.

1.7.1.5   The chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) conceptualise the chronosystem as the property of time and its relationship to interactions between three levels, namely micro, mesosystem, and macrosystem, and how they influence the developing child. The chronosystem refers to the dimension of time, the effective interaction, and the relationship between the active child and their immediate environment, frequently occurring over lengthy periods (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The chronosystem, in this study, included the support that the parents, siblings, peers, and teachers may provide to young children experiencing fear.

1.8   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology outlines the theory and methods that were followed in a research study and explains the procedures that need to be followed in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). In other words, research methodology entails the methods and procedures used to collect and analyse data and the specific tools selected to carry out a research study. Creswell (2014) notes that the research methodology involves a study's research design and research methods. A comprehensive overview of the research methodology used in this study is presented in Table 1-1 on the next page, and a detailed discussion of the research methodology used in this study is presented in chapter four.

Table 0-1: Summary of the research methodology used in this study (compiled by the researcher)

Research Methodology	Description
Research design	The research design is the complete structure that was followed to plan this qualitative study, which assisted the researcher in exploring and understanding what eco-systemic factors influenced fearful experiences among young children (Maree, 2016). I utilised a case study design. In the case of this study, 12 cases of children from three different socio-economic status areas and their parents and teachers were investigated to understand the fearful experiences of children and how teachers and parents handled their child's fears and insecurities.
Research paradigm	Fouche and Schurink (2011:50) refer to the paradigm as a "set of assumptions or beliefs" that a researcher holds about the reality they seek to establish about the phenomenon of interest. This study followed an interpretivism paradigm; the participants were allowed to narrate their subjective experiences and interpret from their viewpoint which factors contribute to fearful experiences.
Research approach	A research approach provides details of the methods used to navigate a study (Maree, 2016). A qualitative approach was followed to provide space for grade three learners to narrate their experiences of fear and present their individual perspectives about the factors that make them fearful in particular circumstances. This study chose an explorative design because the researcher intended to discover or explore ideas about experiences that cause young South African children to become fearful.
Research type	As Rule and John (2011:3) explain, the case study design is "a particular instance, a circumstance or problem that requires investigation". A case study design was used to investigate young South African children's experiences of fear. This study used interpretive and descriptive methods with the hope that young South African children would describe their existing experiences of situations that made them fearful. Twelve grade three learners participated in a multiple case study design to explore and compare fearful experiences among three different socio-economic classes (Yin, 2015). Each grade three learner, as well as their caregiver or parent, formed a case.
Research methods	Research methods describe where and how the researcher gathered data and explain the data analysis procedure (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) reckon that research methods address issues such as collecting, analysing, and interpreting information. This study used different methods to collect data, including grade three learners' drawings and semi-structured interviews with their parents and teachers (Creswell, 2014).

The following sections deliberate on my role as a researcher and the activities that were executed at the research site with participating individuals involved in this study.

1.9   THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The role of the researcher in qualitative studies is that of being an instrument of data collection (Creswell, 2018). My role in this study was to collect data from grade three teachers, parents, and children and to act as participant-observer. My role as a participant-observer allowed me to have informal discussions with the learners, which served as an advantage in collecting in-depth data for this study. The content of the consent letter (see appendix 5) explained my role as a researcher thoroughly to the parents. The letter of consent clarified that the learner's education was a priority and that the research study would not interfere with teaching and learning in the classroom.

1.10 RESEARCH SITE AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

To obtain the views from different contexts within the South African population, three schools from different socio-economic backgrounds were involved in collecting data on what influences the experience of fear in young children. The first school was situated within a township, located in a geographical area where most learners live in poverty-stricken communities. The second school was an inner-city school situated in the eastern suburb of Pretoria. The third school was a private school located in an urban settlement with adequate resources. All the schools consisted of a class size of 30 to 40 grade three learners in the classroom. The township schools are primarily for children from low-income families, whereas the inner-city and private schools are primarily for children from affluent families. Different socio-economic backgrounds were selected to compare and investigate whether a particular setting may determine what makes children fearful. Bronfenbrenner (2005) argues that the environment in which young children are exposed dramatically influences how they perceive and experience systemic factors that may cause fearfulness in them.

The idea behind a qualitative study is to aid the researcher in purposefully selecting participants that would assist in understanding the problem and would be in the ideal position to respond to the research questions (Creswell, 2018). Therefore, the study employed purposive sampling to access, understand, and gather rich data that assisted in answering the research question. All learners from grade three classrooms (in each of the three different schools) were asked to make a drawing of experiences and events that made them fearful.

The general discussion about fearful events/circumstances with the grade three learners was done as part of the Life Skills subject.

Although 60 grade three learners from three schools participated, the researcher purposefully selected four learners' drawings from each school that best depicted fearful experiences in each level of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Thus, data from 12 grade three learners' drawings was used because it was convenient for this purpose.

According to the Washington State Department of Early Learning (2012), grade three learners are considered the older group in the foundation phase and can understand their feelings and make meaningful drawings. The researcher believed that the grade three learners could cooperate with her since they had already been exposed to various fears.

The following criteria were used to select the grade three learners' drawings:

- A grade three learner whose parent/caregiver consented to participation
- A grade three learner who drew a picture that best depicted fear
- Fear was clearly indicated in the drawing through facial expressions and actions; and
- The participant was able to explain the drawing and the fearful situation.

The teachers who participated in this study were those currently employed in the primary schools located in each of three contexts: township, eastern suburb (inner-city), and urban schools in Pretoria. A complete discussion of the three different schools is given in chapter four.

1.11 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

In this study, data collection was conducted using a qualitative approach within the paradigm of interpretivism (Creswell, 2014). The data collection technique, documentation method, and data sources are described in Table 1-2 on the next page.

Table 0-2: Data collection methods used in this study (compiled by the author)

Research question	Data collection methods	Means of documentation	Aim	Challenges and how they were addressed
How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children?	Literature review	Scholarly journals	Obtain what is already known regarding eco-systemic factors influencing fearful experiences among young children nationally and internationally	Inadequate information / Used all available information on the topic.
What are the understandings and experiences of fear in young children?	Literature review Artefacts (story books, drawings, discussion with children) Narratives	Storybook pictures Scholarly journals Documentation Audio recordings and transcriptions Provocation in the form of a prompt.	Obtaining the known factors that influence fear in grade three learners Discussed what exactly in children's drawings and pictures influenced fear in them. Verbatim capturing of responses as data.	Limited time for data collection as it was difficult to reach the grade three learners in schools due to COVID-19 regulations- I used only 45minutes to collect data
What strategies do parents use to minimise the experiences of fear in young children?	Semi-structured interviews with parents	Telephone calls and transcription of parent's voices	Parents' views regarding the factors influencing fear among young children	Although 12 parents agreed to participate in the study, I experienced difficulties reaching the participating parents/caregivers I requested parents to provide their contact details on the consent letters I provided to them. However, I had to make several calls as some parents did not answer their phones.
How do teachers address the experiences of fear in learners?	Semi-structured interviews with teachers	Hard copies of A4 sheets	Educators' views regarding the factors influencing fear among young children	Difficulty gaining access to school educators due to COVID-19 restrictions. Limited time for teachers to answer the interviews, thus no audio recordings of teachers' voices. The hard copy interview sheet was left at the school for teachers to complete.

Research question	Data collection methods	Means of documentation	Aim	Challenges and how they were addressed
What do young children believe to be solutions to fearful situations?	Discussion with children Literature review Narratives	Provocation in the form of a prompt Scholarly journals. Audio recordings and transcriptions	Obtaining the ideas and solutions that grade three learners considered to be useful to cope with fear	Limited time for data collection- I used only 45 minutes to collect data.

The above table summarised the activities in which the participants were involved as part of this research study. Firstly, the participating children were asked to draw pictures of the things that influenced fear in them. They were also asked to discuss what exactly in the drawings influenced the experience of fear in them. Lastly, the participating parents and teachers were asked to answer semi-structured questions based on their views of the factors that influence fear in young children.

Table 0-3: Phases for data collection (Nieuwenhuis, 2015)

PROJECTION OF DATA COLLECTION		
PHASE	**DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY**	**OBJECTIVE**
PHASE 1: ADMINISTRATION	1. Ethical clearance	Permission to conduct research
	2. Contact participants	Develop a relationship with the children, their parents, and teachers
	3. Correspondence with participants	Discuss the nature and the intent of the study with parents and educators
PHASE 2: ARTEFACTS	1. Children listen to the storybook 2. Children draw 3. Children discuss their drawings 4. Journal notes	1. Listen attentively and gather data from children 2. Reflection
PHASE 3: INTERVIEWS	1. Researcher conducted telephone interviews with the parent at their convenience 2. Researcher interviewed educators of children 3. Journal notes	Gather data from parents and educators of grade three children

1.11.1 Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a 'flexible data analysis plan that qualitative researchers use to generate themes from interview data' (Clarke & Braun, 2013:120). This plan of analysing data is flexible in that it does not require any particular research design related to thematic analysis, meaning

it can be employed in narrative inquiry, case studies, and in phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2014). Although thematic analysis is flexible, space was provided for the researcher to collect rich, in-depth, complex descriptions of the data.

1.11.2 Trustworthiness

According to Marshall and Rossman (2014:39), trustworthiness implies the "goodness of qualitative research". Trustworthiness is defined as "the way in which data is collected, sorted and classified, especially if it is verbal and textual" (Maree, 2016:140). This study ensured trustworthiness by providing an in-depth explanation of the research processes, including data collection. Since I was collecting data using various collection methods, this resulted in dependability and trustworthiness, which ensured that the research study was accurate, authentic, and reliable (Maree, 2016). The sub-sections below describe credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as they were used to test the trustworthiness of this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

1.11.3 Dependability

Maree (2016) describes dependability as an element to ensure that similar outcomes would be obtained if the research study were to be duplicated. To ensure the dependability of my study, comprehensive reports of the research process are given to provide other researchers who are interested in repeating the study permission to do so in their future research.

1.11.4 Confirmability

Babbie and Mouton (2012:149) describe confirmability as the "extent to which the findings of a study are the product of a focus of the topic of the study and are not based on the researcher's bias". The process of data analysis was documented, and reflection was given on the procedures throughout the study. Confirmability was done through an audit trail and kept the journal containing the researcher's personal biases and reflections (Maree, 2016).

1.11.5 Credibility

The credibility of the data points to whether any significant results could be deduced from the data. The collected data through observations, drawings, semi-structured interviews, and narrative inquiry was compared and assisted me in gaining insight into what factors influenced fearful experiences among young children.

1.11.6 Transferability

Creswell (2014) describes transferability as the extent to which the results in the study can be transferred across different people, time and to another setting. Providing comprehensive data on the research process, extending from collecting data to compiling the research report enhanced the transferability of findings (Maree, 2016).

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Merten (2010) suggests that ethical aspects are crucial to avoid harmful incidents against participants. Ethical guidelines were applied in this study by, abiding by the University of Pretoria's ethical code of conduct and procedures. As a researcher, I obtained an ethics certificate (see appendix 7) from the University of Pretoria's ethical committee to assist in adhering to and observing the ethical principles thereof. The researcher requested permission from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) (see appendix 1) to continue with the research project. Assent letters (see appendix 6) were provided to the children, and a letter of informed consent to the parents, to inform them about the research procedures and to request permission for their participation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Parents/caregivers of grade three learners were asked to indicate on the consent form if they had an interest in participating in the study.

Likewise, participants were informed regarding the process and purpose of the study, and informed assent was provided beforehand. Participation was voluntary, and participants were permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were guaranteed safety, anonymity, privacy, and protection of their identities by using pseudonyms. More about the ethical principles used are discussed in chapter four.

1.13 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one gave an orientation and background to the research study. The chapter provided the introduction, purpose, and research questions. The explanation of key concepts underlying the study was clarified.

In chapter two, I provide brief discussions and analysis of the existing literature on the causes of fear in young children.

In chapter three, I discuss Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model. Bronfenbrenner's theory underpinned the study and assisted me in identifying the support that young children

experiencing fear can get in each system: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

Chapter four discusses the research methodology, such as the study's design, data collection methods, documentation, and data analysis. Furthermore, the selected participants were described, and the ethical requirements were explained.

In chapter five, I present a discussion on the data analysis and results of this study. The emerging themes were generated from interviews and journal notes. Thematic analysis helped me in identifying, analysing, and reporting themes.

Chapter six presents the recommendations and conclusions. Furthermore, it presents a discussion on the possible contribution to new knowledge and possible limitations.

1.14 SUMMARY

This chapter voiced the research plans and the qualitative research paradigm underpinning this research project. The choices of the theoretical framework and data collection methods were clarified. This was done to obtain answers to the formulated research questions in this study. The next chapter entails a literature review on the main topics related to my study.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter offered an overview of the research study. This chapter delivers an understanding of the notion of fear and the factors influencing fearful experiences among young children. In the initial sections of the chapter, a general description of fear and the various types of fear experienced by young children is presented. Thereafter, a more focused literature review is presented explaining fear and its manifestation.

Subsequently, a detailed discussion into the factors causing fear within the child (innate fear), home, school environment, and within the context of their community is given. The deliberation on teachers' and parents' understanding of fear among young children is then dealt with. In the latter sections of the chapter, I discuss the effects of constant and prolonged fear in young children. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strategies that could be implemented to support young children in coping with fear.

This study aimed to determine which eco-systemic factors contribute to the experience of fear in young children aged eight and nine within the South African context. The living conditions, safety, and well-being of young children in South Africa remain a serious concern. They are exposed to various health, psychological, educational, and social ills (Richter, Mathews, Kagura & Nonterah, 2018). South Africa is regarded as one of the most violent countries in the world and also the country with one of the highest percentages of people living with HIV/AIDS, resulting in numerous orphans (Steyn & Moen, 2019). Young children in South Africa grow up facing many adversities, such as violence, poverty, divorce, parental loss, HIV/AIDS, and neglect, which may subject them to what Carrera, Muñoz and Caballero (2010) call negative emotions, which include fear.

Nitecki and Chung (2016) reiterate that young children must live in safe and secure conditions because it is the foundation of their positive development and well-being. Pizzolongo and Hunter (2011) concur that a safe and secure environment is significant in promoting the healthy development of children and contributes to building trusting relationships with others. Furthermore, these authors believe that should this need for security not be met at home, in school or within society, children may experience fearfulness.

2.2 THE EXPLANATION OF FEAR

Fear is a multifacet concept, as it is evidenced in the numerous descriptions of this emotion. Fear is described as an "intense aversion to or apprehension of a person, place, activity, event, or object that causes emotional distress and often avoidance behaviour" (Kalar, Mustahsan, Fatima, Farooque, Batool, Haider & Feroz, 2013:2). Kozlowska, Walker, McLean and Carrive (2015) describe fear as a natural feeling that is part of human development and regard it as "indispensable" when being confronted with a threatening situation. On the other hand, Broeren, Lester, Muris and Field (2011:50) regard fear as a "response to a particular frightening stimulus, characterised by a high level of avoidance, making the reaction appear to be unreasonable" From their perspective, Carrera et al. (2010:726) explain that fear is not a response but "the mediating psychobiological state that produces the observable responses". These authors explain that cognitive functioning influences the observable outcomes of fear in young children. The foundation of fear is rooted in mental processes, and only observable behaviour becomes noticeable when triggered by ecological factors. In this way, fear conveys the responses of the interrelationship between cognitive and neurocognitive processes (Carrera et al., 2010).

Furthermore, Adolphs (2013:79) clarifies that fear is an "intervening variable between sets of context-dependent stimuli and suits of behavioural response", reiterating the connection between an event or stimulus that causes a specific response or behaviour. On the other hand, Kozlowska et al. (2015) describe fear as a psychosomatic and socio-emotional response to real or imaginary dangers. Therefore, it seems that fear, as an emotional response to a situation, does not need to be based on a real threat but can be something that is imagined or expected. Therefore, both imaginary and real objects may influence fear in young children. In his definition of fear, Lemish (2012:17) refers to the role of the environment when explaining fear as an "internal, personal and subjective perception influenced by environmental factors, which manifest in visible behaviour". Fear is a feeling of disequilibrium when danger is perceived, and the person's well-being is threatened. This perception is an awareness that threats may strike without warning and perceive the environment as an insecure place, causing the person to expect a negative future situation (LoBue & Rakison, 2013). Fear does not represent what a person is experiencing at present but what may be suffered at a later stage.

Despite the notion that fear is considered a negative feeling, Lemish (2015) argues that fear is essential for growth as it provides courage and motivation and can be seen as a fairly reasonable reaction to new events and huge changes, thereby defining fear as a rational and moral emotion. Konkabayeva, Dakhbay, Oleksyuk, Tykezhanova, Alshynbekova and Starikova (2016) also point out the positive effect of fear when maintaining that fear is a functional human reaction to a situation, which encourages learning and provides protection against hazardous situations. Adolphs (2013) see fear as an essential emotion that develops coping strategies when confronted with fearful situations. Ridout and Searles (2011) agree that fear encourages the need to take positive preventative actions, whereas Averbeck, Jones and Robertson (2011) believe that fear is both a cue and a drive. They explain that fear may act as a warning when confronted with an unsafe situation and can also serve as a driving force for defensive behaviour.

In view of the above, Lang (2012:17) considers fear as a survival mechanism that produces defence reactions such as "fleeing and fighting", which serves as protective measures against immediate danger. Hunt and Shahryar (2011) note that people normally attempt to escape when faced with a fearful situation. Therefore, Gdalyahu, Tring, Polack, Gruver, Golshani, Fanselow and Trachtenberg (2012) conclude that fear is a prompt to flee, to attempt to produce the greatest possible distance between the person and the threatening object, to get outside the proximity of danger. Le Doux (2014) perceive flight not only in the sense of spatial distance but also as an obstacle between oneself and a terrifying object, such as protecting oneself with one's arms or hiding behind a door. A central fear element is keeping oneself in a safe position (Le Doux, 2014).

Fear is expressed visibly, in other words, in a physical way (Lang, 2012). In this regard, Marks (2013) asserts that fear begins to manifest when infants experience unpleasant feelings with unfamiliar faces when they are approximately eight months, which may lead to crying. In older children of eight to nine years old, it is evident in facial expressions such as raised eyebrows, which are marked straighter and more horizontal. The upper eyelid is also lifted higher, showing more sclera (white of the eye). The lips become dry, tense, and strained, causing the voice to experience a greater pitch and more anxious tone, including screaming (Lennon & Rentfro, 2010). Furthermore, fear is discernible in reactions such as freezing, being startled, and hypertension (Lang, 2012). It is evident in physical reactions involving breathing and an increased heartbeat, sweating, and shaking. Experiencing fear can also be noted in hair raising, loss of consciousness, shouting, threatening gestures directed at the source of

fear, and sustained staring at the object while moving directly away from it (Marks, 2013). Clavel, Vasilescu and Devillers (2011) add that fainting and immobility are also noticeable in fearful situations. Gdalyahu et al. (2012) highlight the psychosomatic consequences of fear, such as stomach pains, headaches, and tiredness.

Having said all the physical reactions that occur during the experiences of fear, it is evident that fear negatively impacts the development and well-being of young children. In the following section, a discussion on the development of usual (normal) fears in young children is presented.

2.2.1   Development of normal fears in young children

Fear is predominantly prevalent in young children and involves negative, unpleasant feelings of fright induced by thoughts or particular circumstances in the environment, thereby influencing a sense of insecurity (Laporte, Pan, Hoffmann, Wakschlag, Rohde, Miguel & Salum, 2017). Leppma, Szente and Brosch (2015) acknowledge that fears are widely spread among young children. More than two-thirds of children experience this emotion, reaching a peak in middle childhood, with approximately 87% of children experiencing feelings of fear. It seems that as children grow older (in late childhood), their fear level decreases, with 68% feeling less fearful (Marks, 2013). It is clear that there is a developmental pattern of fear in young children and that they also experience fear differently, depending on their varied developmental stages (Fox & Shonkoff, 2012). In other words, young children in different age groups experience different types of fear.

As this study focused on young children aged eight to nine, the types of fear associated with various age groups need further discussion.

Table 2-1 on the next page illustrates various developmental stages and the types of normal fears in young children.

Table 0-1: The developmental stages and types of normal fears in young children (Gullone, 2000:430)

Age	Type of fear
0-6 months	Loud noise, sudden movement
7-12 months	Separation from parents, strangers
1 year	Separation from parent, strangers, injury, toilet
2 years	Big animals, darkness, large objects and machines, sudden changes in personal environment
3 years	Dark room, masks, large animals, snakes, separation from parent
4 years	Dark room, noise at night, large animals, snakes, separation from parent
5 years	Wild animals, bodily injury, dark, bad people, separation from parent
6 years	Ghosts, monsters, witches, dark, being alone, thunder and lightning
7 years	Monsters, storms, being lost, kidnapping, loneliness
8 years	Darkness, kidnapper, robber, mugger, guns or weapons, being alone, animals
9 years	Being lost, bad dreams, dental, bodily harm or accident, being left alone, loneliness, weapons, animals

As young children grow older, their reasoning abilities gradually change from magical to reality thinking skills (Kayyal & Widen, 2015). According to Gross (2020), children aged five years fall under the 'initiative vs guilt' stage of development, which suggests that they begin to plan activities and initiate playing of games including running, cutting, and riding tricycles. Larzelere, Morris and Harrist (2013) further maintain that if parents encourage their child to make up games and initiate the play with peers, this, in turn, contributes to a feeling of security, which contributes to decision-making and leadership skills. However, suppose the

child is denied the opportunity to initiate and receive punishment. This will lead to a feeling of being a follower and influence fear of initiating things, ultimately restricting creativity (King, Vidourek & Merianos, 2016). It is during this stage that young children experience fear of punishment and bodily harm (Riesel, Weinberg, Endrass, Kathmann & Hajcak, 2012).

Children aged six years and above acquire the skills to 'take turns' in games and play according to the rules (Colliver & Fleer, 2016). At this stage, young children need to behave in a socially acceptable manner that would ultimately enable them to gain societal approval and have pride in their attainment (McLeod, Lawler & Schwalbe, 2014). According to Gross (2020:250), during this stage of "industry vs inferiority", young children are eager to fulfil their expectations and display their skills (e.g. athletes), which would be appreciated by society. When parents/caregivers encourage this behaviour, young children begin to develop a sense of confidence and competence in the industry (McLeod et al., 2014). On the other hand, if parents/caregivers prohibit this behaviour, a feeling of inferiority is stirred in young children (McLeod, 2013). During this stage, fear of bodily injury, pain, loneliness, and natural disasters become noticeable in young children (Salmela, Aronen & Salanterä, 2011).

Falmagne (2015) assert that children aged seven to 11 years (part of this study's focus group) begin to use their logical thinking skills. This age group falls within what Piaget (1977:50) terms the "concrete operational stage", during which young children can view themselves differently from the environment and make sense of the difference between inner and exterior events.

In the subsequent section, a thorough discussion of the factors influencing the experience of fear in young children is presented.

2.3   FACTORS CAUSING FEAR IN YOUNG CHILDREN

As this study focused on the eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children, this section began with a discussion of temperament and its relation to how each child uniquely experiences fear. The second part of this section provides an in-depth discussion of the effect of home and school environments in causing fear in young children. The section concluded with a brief overview of the impact of the community in causing fear in young children.

2.3.1 The temperament of the young child

Temperament is defined as "the innate characteristics that determine the child's unique behaviour" (Yurtçu & Pekdogan, 2020:248). Carey (2017:1381) explains that temperament is a "characteristic pattern of the individual's behavioural style, reactions to his/her inner and outer world and his experiences". Similarly, Gagnon et al. (2014:873) believe temperament is a biological, individual characteristic that is 'brought along with innate genetic features and is unchangeable'. In other words, temperament is an inborn trait that manifests in the child's response to the environment and is not subject to change throughout the different developmental phases. To gain perspective on temperament and its influence on the development of young children, and for the purpose of this study, the experience of fear in young children, it is critically important to discuss the broad dimension of this concept.

Gagnon et al. (2014:873) also assert that temperament involves "individual differences between self-regulation and reactivity". To put it differently, reactivity is considered a genetic trait that responds to a stimulus in the environment and is observed in the ways children engage with and approach different situations. In contrast, regulation is identified as the ability of young children to manage "their innate responses (or reactivity) to environmental stimuli" (Gagnon et al., 2014:873). Evans et al. (2012) propose that the combination of reactivity and regulation underlies the emergence of social development in young children. In other words, the two elements of temperament work together to form the basis of social development in young children. In this way, Gagnon et al. (2014) propose that high levels of negative reactivity in young children are linked to various social problems and incompetence. This is because "reactive children tend to display fewer prosocial behaviours, interact less with peers, and exhibit aggression during peer interactions" (Gagnon et al., 2014:873). To put it differently, reactive children's tendency to withdraw from situations may lead them to avoid play situations, which prevents them from experiencing opportunities to develop social competencies. In this regard, Niditch and Varela (2018) warn that a high level of reactivity in young children may result in disruptive behaviours during play.

2.3.1.1 Self-regulation

Self-regulation involves young children's "ability to manage their emotions to adapt to the environment" (Gartstein, Putnam & Rothbart, 2012:197). In other words, self-regulation is the capability of young children to understand and control their reactions in a way that they transform their emotions to adapt to the environment, even if the child does not want to do

so. In this way, children with adequate self-regulation abilities can modify how they express their emotions in situations that induce intense feelings, including negative comments by peers. Pepler, Craig, Cummings, Petrunka and Garwood (2017:91) mention that young children with "low self-regulation" are more likely to show negative reactions towards others, which may predict internalising problems, social incompetence, poor adjustment, and problems with peers. From this perspective, it is evident that temperament shapes the social and emotional development of young children and the way they react to the environment.

To explain how temperament influences the tendency towards fear, Sofologi, Koulouri, Moraitou and Papantoniou (2021) identified three broad elements of temperament. These elements are 1) extraversion, 2) negative affectivity, and 3) effortful control (Sofologi et al., 2021). The first dimension, namely surgency/extraversion, and the last dimension, which is effortful control, are not discussed in detail as they are not directly linked to fear. Therefore, only negative affectivity as an element of temperament is discussed below.

2.3.1.2 Negative affectivity

Gartstein et al. (2012:197) identify negative affectivity as the second element of temperament that comprises "fear, frustration, sadness, dysthymia, and anger". Interestingly, Rothbart (2011:85) indicates that babies as young as three months can display 'feelings of anger and frustration, which in turn may predict internalising and externalising problems'. Fearful emotions as a dimension of negative affectivity, which was the focus of this study, manifest in 'behavioural inhibition', and is noticeable from seven to ten months of age (Sofologi et al., 2021:333). Pérez-Edgar and Guyer (2014:183) reckon that a fearful temperament in young children is described by behaviour inhibition that involves "shyness, social withdrawal, reticent behaviour and difficulties to adapt to the environment". In so doing, young children with fearful temperaments have trouble adjusting to the environment and show withdrawal from social interactions. In this way, fearful children display reticent reactions during opportunities to interact with peers, thereby showing fearfulness to joining other children playing, and they remain over-looking and hovering (Arbeau et al., 2010).

On the other hand, Sawyers, Ollendick, Brotman, Pine, Leibenluft, Carney and Hettema (2019) add that when young children become more inclined to react fearfully than others in an environment, it is an indication of the genetic influence within them. These authors conducted a study on identical twins and found significant evidence suggesting that "fear is a heritable trait" (Sawyers et al., 2019:204). Similar to Sawyers et al. (2019), Manolov,

Stoyanov and Georgieva (2020:1) agree that fearfulness experiences among young children are influenced by several genes from parents, mainly if parents experienced excessive trauma in their lives. In this way, the genes regulate the "neurotransmitter, which is the chemical that transfers message between neurons and their receptors which receives information exist in various systems in young children". Thus, the combination of these different systems transmitted from parents to young children makes the child react with considerable fear to events in the social environment (Loken, Hettema, Aggen & Kendler, 2014).

Furthermore, Dias and Ressler (2014:89) also identified the concept of epigenetic inheritance, which entails that the sperm cells can transfer the fear message to young children, thereby signifying that there is "something in the sperm that allows the information to be inherited". Moreover, the genetic component is primarily influenced by young children's experiences and interactions in the social environment. Hence the chemical changes in the DNA may turn the genes on and off. In other words, the interactions and experiences of young children in an environment can significantly alter the DNA's functioning without modifying the DNA itself (Dias, Maddox, Klengel & Ressler, 2015).

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that some children are naturally born with a negative temperament that makes them more inclined to experience fearful emotions than other children. It is also important to note that fear is a genetic factor that is transmitted from parents to young children (Sawyers et al., 2019). Although temperament can influence the experience of fear in young children, family plays a significant role in shaping how children approach and react to their environment (Popov & Ilesanmi, 2015). In the following section, I discuss the factors causing fear within the home environment.

2.3.2   The home environment

Home is the immediate environment in which the child develops physical, social, and emotional security that is imperative for healthy development (Darling-Churchill & Lippman, 2016). Similarly, Sandstrom and Huerta (2013) agree that the home environment should provide young children with feelings of love, support, security, and stability. Runcan (2012) concurs with the previous researchers that parents need to build a conducive atmosphere of safety and trust within the home environment. Hornbuckle (2010) warns that if young children's need for love, safety, and security is not fulfilled at home, children tend to develop the idea that they have no security, which may create feelings of fear.

This section begins with a discussion of different parenting styles that has the potential to cause fear in young children. Then, the deliberation on the effect of divorce and violence in influencing the experience of fear in young children is dealt with. Lastly, I discuss the impact of violence and media in causing fear in young children.

2.3.2.1 The effect of parenting styles in causing fear in young children

In the following section, I discuss four different styles of parenting as identified by (Cherry, 2016) and their influence on young children's experiences of fearful emotions.

2.3.2.1.1 Authoritarian Parenting

The authoritarian parenting style is characterised by low warmth and support and unresponsiveness to children's needs, showing less interest in their children's feelings (Lansford, Sharma, Malone, Woodlief, Dodge, Oburu & Di Giunta, 2014). Brooker and Buss (2014) reckon that authoritarian parents display intrusiveness and negative reactions towards their children. In this way, authoritarian parents' model negative reactions and they lack the ability "to teach their children prosocial skills, subsequently leading to the development of inadequate social competencies, difficulty initiating positive peer interactions, the use of aversive methods to achieve goals, social withdrawal and hostility when frustrated with peers and decreased empathy" (Guyer, Jarcho, Pérez-Edgar, Degnan, Pine, Fox & Nelson, 2015:863). Moreover, authoritarian parents impose strict discipline strategies towards their children (King et al., 2016). Thabet and Qrenawi (2017) add that authoritarian parents execute rigid control and fixed rules because they are in authority and leave their children with little interaction or no communication. In other words, authoritarian parents force young children to follow their strict rules without any flexibility, and if children do not comply with the rules, they get harsh punishment. Riesel, Weinberg, Endrass, Kathmann and Hajcak (2012) advise that consistent use of harsh strategies such as corporal punishment influence fear of punishment in young children as they are more inclined to anticipate corporal punishment and negative reactions from their parents. From this perspective, Riesel et al. (2012) warn that when young children constantly anticipate corporal punishment, they experience high levels of fear even in low-threat contexts. Thus, young children raised by authoritarian parents are more inclined to experience fearful emotions as they constantly expect corporal punishment from their parents.

2.3.2.1.2 Authoritative parenting

Morris, Criss, Silk and Houltberg (2017:54) postulate that authoritative parents spend quality time in their parent-child interactions that involve "warmth, responsiveness, and nurturing". In this way, children growing up with authoritative parents develop good attachment, nurturing, and a sense of security. Larzelere et al. (2013) maintain that authoritative parents employ flexible rules and involve their children in decision-making. In this way, Baumrind (2013:76) asserts that authoritative parents "model effective, adaptive coping strategies that promote their children's social functioning linked to positive developmental outcomes, such as independence, self-regulation, and social interactions". Patel (2019) reckons that parents who model encouragement and support may reduce young children's level of fear. When fearful children are confronted with a novel situation, they have the conviction that their parents will provide an environment where they may experience safety and security. Therefore, Gagnon et al. (2014) conclude that authoritative parents mediate between a child's fearful temperament (internalising) and support and encouragement that predicts social competence in young children. From this perspective, Baumrind (2013) concludes that young children raised by authoritative parents experience low levels of fear and high levels of security and safety.

2.3.2.1.3 Permissive parenting

Permissive parenting involves high responsiveness, warmth, and support with low demandingness and exercises little behaviour control but may resort to corporal punishment as a discipline strategy (Baumrind, 2013). Simons, Simons, and Su (2013) postulate that permissive parents use corporal punishment without monitoring their children, and they are inconsistent with their discipline strategies. Hence, such parents are more likely to use corporal punishment occasionally, such as "when they are emotionally overwhelmed with feelings of frustration and anger towards the child" (Simons et al., 2013:1276). Uji, Sakamoto, Adachi, and Kitamura (2014) add that permissive parents set up few rules without explaining the consequences of non-compliance. In this way, permissive parents do not supervise nor set limits for their children and provide them with great freedom to engage in various behaviours of their choice (Jabeen et al., 2013). In this regard, Cherry (2016) advises that children from a permissive parenting style are at greater risk of engaging in dangerous situations due to a lack of parental monitoring and, consequently, are more inclined to experience behavioural or conduct problems.

The lack of guidance and monitoring displayed in permissive parenting is evident in their lack of responsibility to discourage young children's inappropriate behaviours and poor choices, thereby expecting their children to self-regulate themselves, which influences insecurities in young children (Rubin, Bukowski & Bowker, 2015). Valkenburg, Piotrowski, Hermanns and De Leeuw (2013) acknowledge that young children raised by permissive parents lack self-discipline and self-control, increasing their difficulties in peer relations and environmental adjustment. Jabeen et al. (2013) maintains that typical eight to nine-year-old children strive to show competence and independence through performing tasks and responsibilities. However, permissive parents deprive them of the opportunity to demonstrate skills and potential on their own, as they consider them incapable. Cox, Wang and Gustafsson (2011:75) believe that permissive parents "are often overwhelmed by the demands of life and do not devote the time and energy necessary to help their children maximise their potential" Cox et al. (2011) postulate that when parents are faced with life's demands, they become more stressed and less able to protect their children, thus exposing young children to feelings of fear and insecurities (Cox et al., 2011).

2.3.2.1.4   Uninvolved/Neglectful parenting

Neglectful parenting is also called uninvolved, detached, dismissive, or hands-off parents. They are low in warmth and control and generally not involved in their child's life (Abraham, 2010). Abraham (2010) explains that neglectful parents are disengaged in the life of their children and show low responsiveness and do not set limits for their children. Lunkenheimer, Ram, Skowron and Yin (2017) advise that parents from a disadvantaged economic status are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety due to financial constraints. As a result, they display unresponsiveness, insecure attachment, and low warmth towards their children. This influences avoidant attachment in young children, which means that children experience feelings of fearfulness and insecurities. Similar to permissive parents, neglectful parents give their children freedom but with little emotional support (Anderson, Butcher, Hoynes & Whitmore Schanzenbach, 2016). In other words, neglectful parents are insensitive to the emotional needs of their children. Hussain and Warr (2019) advise that if parents do not listen attentively and validate their child's emotional needs, young children are more likely to develop self-doubt and low self-esteem.

Furthermore, Webb (2012) posits that when parents are not emotionally attuned to their children, young children are more likely to believe that their emotional needs are being

ignored. Therefore, they experience a lack of affection, feel unwanted, and consequently experience insecurities and fear. In this regard, Filip, Popp and Andrioni (2019) reckon that neglectful parents evoke feelings of mistrust in young children that may manifest in fear, social withdrawal, and, ultimately, maladjustment. Young children raised by neglectful parents do not trust their parents to provide emotional care for them and have trouble building trusting relationships with peers (Øverlien & Holt, 2019). Moreover, Baumrind (2013) postulates that neglectful parenting is extremely detrimental to young children's development, especially regarding delinquent behaviour. Hussain and Warr (2019) warn that if parents neglect the emotional needs of their children, they tend to show signs of anger, confusion, frustration, aggression, and, consequently, behavioural problems.

In view of the above discussion, it is evident that some parenting styles may cause fear in young children. Gaydosh (2015) reckons that exposure to traumatic events like divorce can negatively affect stability and security in a child's life. In the next section, I discuss the effects of divorce in causing fear in young children.

2.3.2.2   The effect of divorce on causing fear in young children

In this section, I discuss divorce as part of the microsystem because divorce occurs in the immediate environment in which the young child is making direct contact and relationship with their parents. Statistics South Africa recorded nearly 25 326 cases of divorce in 2016. Hall and Sambu (2019) report that 42% of South African children live in single-parent families, often only with the mother. The increasing number of yearly divorces leaves young children afraid and insecure because some divorced parents are less likely to show emotional support and protection towards their children (McLanahan, Tach & Schneider, 2013). When two parents go through the process of divorce, they are faced with several stressors, including parental distress (Fagan, 2013). Moen (2021) acknowledges that divorced parents experience increased stress and continued conflict between which young children are often trapped. Moreover, the increased level of parental conflict can lead to emotional insecurity in young children (McLanahan et al., 2013).

Fabricius, Greiffenstein, Cuneo, Wight, Davis, Schmidtz and Dieter (2019) mention that children impacted by parental discord often experience conflicting emotions. They may be unsure whether their parents will be able and willing to continue providing care for them, or they may believe that they are the cause of conflict between parents. They blame themselves and experience feelings of guilt that leave them with negative expectations that parental

conflict will lead to less parental support, thus, fear of neglect. The departure of one parent from the marriage can cause "worry about who will provide care and protection if one or both parents abandon them" (Çetinkaya & Erçin, 2015:91).

Moreover, when one partner withdraws from the marriage, young children are often confronted with decreased daily contact with one parent, mostly fathers. Consequently, these children lose parent-child attachment with their fathers (Gaydosh, 2015). In this regard, these children experience the intense pain of losing a parent and often may ask for the parent when they are not around (McLanahan et al., 2013). Gaydosh (2015) adds that the father's withdrawal from the marriage reduces parenting time with children after divorce and influences emotional insecurity in young children because they lose daily interactions to reassure them of care, protection, and self-worth; thus, children experience fear of neglect.

Roth, Harkins, and Eng (2014) add that divorced parents are exposed to increased levels of anxiety and depression that lead to a display of low warmth and unresponsiveness, as well as negative reactions towards their children. As a result, they experience parent-child conflict that contributes to insecurities in young children. Sorek (2019:107) agrees that "high-conflict damages young children's trust in their parents while making them insecure and dependent on their parents for support and security". Cherry (2016) concedes with Sorek (2019) and maintains that insecure children are more likely to interact with parents in a way that evokes parental responses that show protection and care. From this perspective, it is clear that parent-child interaction involving negative reactions, limited support, and interaction time with their fathers increases the experience of high levels of fear in young children (Fabricius et al., 2019). Furthermore, Moller (2017) reveals that an excessive and prolonged experience of fear in young children may result in somatic symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, chest pains, and nausea.

On the other hand, the intense feelings of fear in young children can be moderated and reduced when they spend quality time with their fathers after divorce (Fabricius et al., 2019). In other words, a supportive and warm parent-child relationship after divorce can help young children reduce their levels of fear and increase adjustment to their environment. From this perspective, Baumrind (2013) reiterates that young children need quality parent-child interaction that involves warmth and support to feel secure and adjust to their environment. Moreover, many children from divorced families are exposed to financial struggles with few material resources available (Amato & James, 2010). In this way, Moen (2021) explains that

divorced parents often leave their children in the care of relatives to search for employment and gain financial stability. In doing so, divorced parents find themselves working longer hours, leading to a lack of quality parent-child interactions and inability to manage parent roles and responsibilities. Divorced parents work longer hours and find it challenging to manage parental responsibilities; thus, children take over the roles and responsibilities of parents, which exposes them to child-headed households (Le Roux-Kemp, 2013). Pillay (2016) reckons that it is very common for minors in South African society to care for other siblings and manage the household. However, Makuyana, Mbulayi and Kangethe (2020) believe that young children taking child-headed roles and responsibilities are more likely to experience fear and insecurities. They feel unprotected as their parents work extended hours and cannot provide protection and a secure home.

Furthermore, 40% of new marriages consist of one or both spouses who had been married before (Fagan & Churchill, 2012). Many children suffer the negative effect of continuing changes in the family dynamics, particularly if both parents re-marry. Young children may develop a sense of security if parents provide a stable, reliable, supportive, and nurturing environment in which they have a routine of doing things and know what to expect (Osborne, Berger & Magnuson, 2012). The arrival of a new stepparent may interfere with family routines and result in conflicts and negative parent-child interactions (Davids, Roman & Leach, 2015). The family structure, consisting of stepparents and possibly many other stepsiblings, may pose a unique challenge following a lack of attention, love, support, nurturing, material needs, and different parenting patterns from stepparents, which ultimately influence insecurities and fear of neglect in young children (Osborne et al., 2012).

In view of the above, it is clear that divorce exposes parents to stress. Fagan (2013) postulates that when parents experience a stressful situation, they struggle to cope and survive difficult circumstances. In doing so, divorced parents lack parental care and the ability to provide secure attachment to their children, ultimately exposing young children to fear of neglect and insecurities. Moreover, divorce influences parents to display unresponsive and negative emotional reaction that causes fear in young children (Osborne et al., 2012). The following section provides a detailed discussion of the effect of violence in influencing the experience of fear in young children.

2.3.3 The effect of violence in causing fear in young children

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2020), approximately 3.3 to 10 million South African children witness the incidence of violence in their homes. Most cases of domestic violence are committed by men, while women often become the victims. The South African Medical Research Council and the national statistical agency Statistics South Africa conducted a survey in 2017, which revealed that one in five women experience violence at the hands of a male spouse (Statistics SA, 2020). This survey revealed that 40% of men assault their female partners each day, and three women in South Africa are killed by their intimate partners on a daily basis. Similarly, research conducted by the World Health Organisation found that 65% of women in South Africa had experienced spousal abuse in 2016 (WHO, 2018). Although children may not be directly involved in all these violent acts, they witness some of them. In this way, young children are subjected to extreme forms of domestic violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse and other traumatic experiences that interfere with their emotional development (Mncanca & Okeke, 2019).

World Health Organisation (2012) describes domestic violence as any violent or aggressive behaviour within the home, typically involving the physical or verbal abuse of a spouse, a child or both. Domestic violence is any threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence, or abuse (psychological, physical, verbal, sexual, financial, or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, or sexual orientation) by a current or former intimate partner or family member (Filip et al., 2019). In other words, children may not be directly involved in all these violent acts. Still, they may witness violence in which one parent/caregiver victimises the other spouse in the child's immediate environment, consequently making the experience more personal for the child to develop emotional insecurities (Melki, Fitzpatrick, Oghia & Pagani, 2016).

In this regard, Jenney and Alaggia (2018) postulate that the non-abusing parent spends a significant amount of time striving to survive the violence to the extent that they are unable to provide quality parenting to the children. Consequently, the non-abusing parent displays a "decrease in parental warmth and caring in a household where violence takes place" (Stanley, 2011:76). Stanley (2011) postulates that the victim parent is more likely to have trouble in protecting and providing emotional support as well as encouragement to the young children. This relationship is then often characterised by threats, insults, humiliation, accusations, disapproval, and mocking of the child (Stanley, 2011). Therefore, young children

who are exposed to violence at home may feel unwanted and blame themselves for the abuse. Consequently, they experience a lack of love and acceptance and low self-confidence. Øverlien and Holt (2019) assert that young children exposed to violence do not trust their parents to provide care for them; as a result, they experience fear of neglect and physical harm. Edwards (2019) concludes that young children are often victims of violence between parents and choose to isolate themselves from others because they view their homes as the most dangerous place to live.

From the above discussion, it is clear that young children exposed to violence at home are less likely to have constant mutual interactions and relationships with their parents/caregivers, which is necessary for physical, social and psychological security (Stanley, 2011). Øverlien and Holt (2019) explain that if the child experiences violence in the home, then the child's relationship with parents/caregiver falls apart, resulting in the child experiencing a lack of love and support. In other words, young children exposed to violence at home lack emotional support and encouragement from their parents, leaving them with intense fear and insecurities (Jenney & Alaggia, 2018). The next section highlights the effects of media in causing fear in young children.

2.3.4   The effect of media in causing fear in young children

Young children have access to various technological media to the extent that media is becoming so dominant in their lives. The increased amount of time that young children spend on technological media can influence their thinking and behaviour and their understanding of reality (Senturk, 2011). Cantor (2012) concedes with Senturk (2011) that as young children spend extended hours on various technological media, much of their social life takes place while sitting in front of a television, computer screen, an iPod, or a smartphone. Parents perceive television programmes, particularly horror movies, to cause fear in young children (Genner & Süss, 2017).

Television is becoming the most popular source of media, which is more often watched than other media, such as reading the newspaper and listening to radio news (Lemish, 2015). Hoge, Bickham and Cantor (2017) maintain that television displays horror movies, violent events, and images involving killing, self-harm, and injuries of individuals that induce fear in young children. The amount of time young children spends watching horror movies is so influential that it shapes their minds, views, perspectives, and emotions about the environment (Genner & Süss, 2017). Melki et al. (2016) also highlight the idea that when

young children are exposed to violent acts and images on television programmes, they may have negative consequences on their emotional development. Cantor, Byrne, Moyer-Gusé and Riddle (2010) agree with the previous authors and maintain that young children can produce very clear, powerful, and detailed images and descriptions of horror movies they see on television in their minds and believe that it might happen to them. Thus, they experience feelings of fear. Melki et al. (2016) confirm that exposure to violent media among young children may cause a high level of fearfulness. In so doing, young children still struggle to distance themselves from the scary movie they saw on television to their real everyday lives (Jennings, 2020). From this perspective, it is clear that young children have not yet developed the ability to differentiate between imaginary and realistic thinking skills (Kayyal & Widen, 2013). This premise is linked to Piaget's (1962) theory when describing the pre-operational period (two to seven years) of development, where the child's thoughts are dominated by supernatural thinking, and they are unable to distinguish between imagery and what is real. Evidence shows that access to scary television movies may cause fear in young children, particularly because young children are struggling to distinguish between imaginary and realistic thinking skills (Kayyal & Widen, 2013).

Having discussed all the factors from the home environment that cause fear in young children, I then discuss factors from the school environment that cause fear in young children.

2.3.5   The school environment

In this section, I include the role of the teacher and peers as factors causing fear in young children because they spend a significant amount of time interacting with their teachers and peers in the school environment (Oswell, 2013). A discussion of the teacher-child relationship in causing fear in young children is followed by a discussion of the role of peer rejection in causing fear in young children. The last part of this section discusses the role of peer victimisation in causing fear in young children.

2.3.5.1   The effect of teacher-child relationship in causing fear in young children

The schooling experiences of young children may differ partly due to their unique temperament. Young children with the type of temperament called negative affectivity "enter the school environment already prone to feelings of fear" (Coplan & Rudasill, 2016:54). Coplan and Rudasill (2016) agree that negative affectivity, as a type of temperament, predisposes young children to fearful feelings and the school environment often worsens their fear when they are exposed to a negative teacher-child relationship. Coplan and Rudasill

(2016) maintain that the demands of the classroom and the negative teacher-child relationship can heighten the already-existing feelings of fear.

Lippard, La Paro, Rouse, and Crosby (2018) argue that young children are more likely to show fearful behaviour and difficulty adjusting to the school environment when the teacher is unsupportive. Breeman, Wubbels, Van Lier, Verhulst, van der Ende, Maras and Tick (2015) agree that negative teacher-child relationships influence fear in young children and cause them to feel uncomfortable in the classroom. Similarly, White (2016) found that teachers who lack warmth and support are less likely to form close teacher-child relationships with young children. They are more likely to influence fear in young children because children feel comfortable interacting with kind, patient, and supportive teachers. White (2016:30) argues that young children often feel safe and secure with teachers who display "respect, listening to them, talking to them, and making eye contact with them during everyday communication" in the classroom. Coplan et al. (2016) concur with White (2016) that when teachers lack sensitivity, scaffolding, and responsiveness towards young children, they are more likely to experience fear. Zhang and Nurmi (2012) confirm that a warm and safe classroom environment with adequate support from a teacher is very effective in reducing young children's fearful emotions. These children show good behaviour in the classroom and interact well with others. Kalutskaya, Archbell, Moritz Rudasill and Coplan (2015) reiterate that the interaction between the teacher and child filled with less support and encouragement may cause fear and poor academic performance in young children.

2.3.5.2 The effect of peer relations in causing fear in young children

Perolli-Shehu (2019) postulates that young children need to form friendships with others from an early period. Peer relationships play a big and significant role in developing socio-emotional skills and present young children with opportunities to interact and socialise with peers, thus providing a good opportunity to adapt to their environment (Rubin et al., 2015). However, Rubin and Ross (2012) argue that if young children lack the social competence needed to build friendships and understand their own emotions and the emotions of others then, peers may contribute negatively to their emotional development. In the subsequent section, I discuss the role of peer rejection in causing fear in young children.

2.3.5.2.1   The role of peer rejection in causing fear in young children

The ability to build relationships begins with the competence to control one's feelings. In this regard, Rubin, and Ross (2012) warn that young children who are fearful seem to struggle to manage their feelings and to make sense of the feelings of peers and others. Therefore, they find it difficult to build friendships. In this sense, they have greater likelihood of displaying what Arbeau et al. (2010:259) call "withdrawal behaviour" in social situations. In other words, they have limited potential to relate with their peers, which may affect their ability to keep friendships, and ultimately find themselves being rejected by peers. Coplan and Ooi (2013) reckon that fearful young children lack social competence, such as making eye contact and initiating interactions with peers, which further inhibits their abilities to engage in peer activities. In so doing, they lack the 'social approach motive', which makes it difficult for young children to express their feelings and to comprehend the feelings of others, which ultimately results in increased problems of "social interactions, and to participate in and benefit from social support" (Zhu, Fu, Li, Wu & Yang, 2021:784). Therefore, they find themselves faced with "avoidance and isolation from social company" because peers often do not accept children who are socially withdrawn (Kiel & Buss, 2011:47). Hence, peers show negative responses and exclude them from peer groups (Kiel & Buss, 2011:47). Fanger, Frankel, and Hazen (2012) reiterate that peers reject children who withdraw from social activities because of their behaviour inhibition and social disinterest that contradicts the age-specific norms and expectations for social interaction and relationship as well as group-involvement. In this regard, peers group each other and isolate fearful children because they lack social competence, heightening fear and low self-esteem (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Jones, Greenberg, and Crowley (2015) conclude that when young children are exposed to repeated rejection by peers, they no longer feel a sense of belonging within the peer relations. Thus, fear of loneliness and rejection manifests.

Although Rubin, Coplan, Bowker and Menzer (2014) discovered that young children with fear lack social competence to relate and play with others, it is important to note that fearful children do not dislike interactions with peers. Rubin, Coplan, Chen, Bowker, and McDonald (2013) agree with Rubin et al. (2014) that young children with fear sometimes interact and participate in parallel play with peers. These authors uphold that when fearful children interact occasionally and engage in similar play with peers, such encounters may be enough for them to nominate and be nominated as friends (Rubin et al., 2013). Thus, it is important to note that fearful children have friends.

In the following section, I discuss the role of peer victimization in causing fear in young children.

2.3.5.2.1 The role of peer victimisation in causing fear in young children

Given that fearful children spend time alone, peers may view them as quiet, shy, submissive, and less approachable. Thus, peers are more likely to avoid interactions with fearful children (Eggum-Wilkens et al., 2014). The shyness and submissive tendency of fearful children to withdraw and isolate themselves from peer groups make them 'easy' targets of bullying (Govender, 2013). Fearful children become victims of bullying because they are typically timid, insecure, cautious, have low self-esteem, and seldom defend themselves or retaliate when confronted by a bully (Govender, 2013). Fearful children are more likely to become victims of bullying because they appear to be physically and emotionally weaker than their peers (Arseneault, Bowes & Shakoor, 2010). Therefore, aggressive peers may initiate fights and encourage the victimisation of fearful children by provoking and upsetting them physically, verbally, and emotionally (Govender, 2013). Exposure to repeated victimisation in the form of physical, verbal, and emotional abuse leads young children to fear their classmates and ultimately to withdraw further from peer interaction and possibly other school-related activities (Rubin et al., 2014). Thus, fear of bullying begins to manifest.

Having discussed the role of the school environment in causing fear in young children, I discuss factors from the community that cause fear in young children in the following section.

2.3.6 The role of the community in causing fear of young children

In this section, I discuss the effect of the community in causing fear among young children. This section commences with a discussion of disadvantaged socio-economic neighbourhoods on young children's experiences of fear. Thereafter, I deliberate on the effect of community violence in causing fear in young children.

2.3.6.1 The effect of disadvantaged socio-economic neighbourhoods on young children's experience of fear

The number of unemployed individuals in South Africa is 33.9% (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The increased number of unemployed households often exposes parents to a lack of financial stability that makes it difficult to provide children with proper healthcare and nutrition. In other words, children from poor neighbourhoods are more likely to skip necessary medical care due to the cost (Mills & Amick, 2010). They are exposed to food insecurity and

insufficient nutrition access (Coleman-Jensen, 2012). Williams, Manez Costa, Sutherland, Celliers and Scheffran (2019) agree that young children from disadvantaged socio-economic neighbourhoods often live in informal settlements and unsafe housing without proper sanitation, clean running water, and limited access to nutritious food. Swanepoel and DeBeer (2011) reckon that young children from underprivileged neighbourhoods live in shacks made from weak and unsafe materials. These shacks are too small to accommodate the number of individuals living in them and not strong enough to offer the necessary protection.

Moreover, Conger, Conger, and Martin (2010:685) postulate that financial struggles expose parents to "emotional distress that leads to an increased risk of inter-parental conflict and violence including emotional abuse, control, and physical violence". Zhou (2018:92) agrees that 'stress resulting from job changes, loss of income, health problems, or other aspects of the family environment can heighten the level of conflict and violence in the home'. In other words, financial instability exposes parents to distress and may lead to conflict and violence between parents and consequently exposing young children to experience more stress and violence (Ralli, Cedola, Russo, Urbano, Cimino, Fonte & Ercoli, 2020). Furthermore, Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt and Kim (2012) agree and maintain that parental exposure to unemployment and lack of finances may result in a lack of satisfaction in the relationship and, ultimately, one partner pulling out of the relationship, and may consequently damage the inter-parental relationship. From this perspective, Harold, Acquah, Sellers, Chowdry and Feinstein (2016:22) highlight the relationship between financial hardship and parental violence, particularly that "involves frequent, intense and poorly resolved conflicts between parents is associated to depression and emotional distress, and consequently increase in harsh and inconsistent parenting practice".

Ralli et al. (2020) acknowledges that when parents experience limited access to financial resources, they often face anxiety, depression, and stress that restrict and make it difficult for them to show love, care, warmth, and responsiveness to their children's needs. Popov and Ilesanmi (2015:253) agree that "distressed parents have been found to be less involved with and affectionate towards their children, exhibit poor communication skills and negative emotional reactions". Lunkenheimer et al. (2017) advises that parents from a disadvantaged socio-economic status are more likely to display unresponsiveness, insecure attachment, and low warmth towards their children, thereby influencing avoidant attachment in young children, which means that children experience feelings of fearfulness and insecurities. Economically disadvantaged parents are more likely to compromise parental sensitivity and interactions

with their children and consequently show a high level of control towards their children (Shelleby & Shaw, 2014). In this way, children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are exposed to insecure parent-child relationships, and they experience fear of neglect and fear that their parents/caregivers will not be able to meet their needs (Maguire-Jack & Font, 2017). Thus, Anderson et al. (2016) advises that when young children experience a lack of security, they are more likely to experience fear of neglect and mistrust towards their parents/caregivers. In this regard, Lee (2011) affirms that young children living in disadvantaged socio-economic neighbourhoods are more likely to develop low self-esteem, inability to trust parents/caregiver, hopelessness, and a lack of belonging.

In view of the above, it is clear that eight to nine-year-old children living in disadvantaged socio-economic neighbourhoods are at greater risk of developing negative emotions, particularly feelings of fear, neglect, and mistrust. The subsequent section discusses the effect of community violence in causing fear in young children.

2.3.6.2 The effect of community violence in causing fear in young children

Hartinger-Saunders, Rine, Nochajski and Wieczorek (2012) describe community violence as interpersonal violence that is not committed by a family member and is intended to hurt one or more people. Community violence occurs differently, ranging from political violence to neighbourhood crime, street violence, gangs, weapons, to ongoing civil conflict or war (Guerra & Dierkhising, 2011). Exposure to violence is a common experience for most children growing up in the South African context. Young children become witnesses of real violent scenes, including sexual assault, robberies, and weapon attacks (such as stabbing, murder, gun shots). Hartinger-Saunders et al. (2012) concur with Guerra and Dierkhising (2011) that South African children are exposed to violence in their daily lives, in which they become direct/indirect victims or hear about events of violence or witness violent acts happening to others. South African Police Service (SAPS) crime records showed that violence against children is prevalent in South Africa. Between 2011 and 2012, an estimated number of 50 688 children were victims of various forms of violent crimes (SAPS, 2017).

The crime level in South Africa is alarming, with housebreaking being the most common crime encountered by households (Smith, 2019). An estimated 1.2 million individuals experienced housebreaking in 2019-2020, affecting 891 000 households. On the other hand, home robbery stands at 169 000 incidents, affecting 139 000 households (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Moreover, the incidents of personal property theft were calculated at 1.1 million

occurrences, which affected 902 000 young adults aged 16 years old (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Incidents of murder were calculated at 21 325 between the years 2019 and 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). According to the South African Police Service (SAPS, 2017), crime records indicate that several 54 927 robberies took place between 2015 and 2016.

Margolin et al. (2010) argue that exposure to violence has the potential to cause fear that has a lasting impact on the development of young children. Margolin et al. (2010) and Burnside and Gaylord-Harden (2019) acknowledge that exposure to community violence leaves young children with a detrimental experience that contributes to the causes of fear. Like previous authors, Guerra and Dierkhising (2011) concede that community violence may suddenly occur without warning, reiterating that young children living in communities driven by violent acts often experience intensified fears that harm can happen at any time. In so doing, DeRose, Shiyko, Foster and Brooks-Gunn (2011) declare that young children exposed to frequent violent activities in the community experience difficulties in building positive and trusting relationships with others. DeRose et al. (2011) affirm that repeated exposure to acts of violence in the community causes young children to develop insecurities and a lack of trust for other people. In other words, when young children are exposed to recurring acts of community violence, they experience fear that makes them have trouble forming secure relationships with others in the environment. Therefore, Guerra and Dierkhising (2011) conclude that when young children face difficulties forming these secure attachment relationships with others, it can interfere with their development of a basic sense of trust. This results in young children viewing the environment as an unsafe and dangerous place to live in.

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that young children living in communities in which they are repeatedly exposed to events of violence find it difficult to trust other people around them. As a result, they experience insecurities and view the environment as terrifying. The subsequent section comprehensively discusses parents' understanding of fear among children.

2.4   PARENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF FEAR AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN

According to Geoffroy, Séguin, Lacourse, Boivin, Tremblay and Côté (2012), parents observe their children to be more sensitive and fearful in unfamiliar situations. These authors maintain that young children become clingy towards their parents (Geoffroy et al., 2012). In other words, young children with fear tend to be very close to their parents or caregivers. Krauss

and Krauss (2019) concede with Geoffroy et al. (2012) and uphold that young children with fear often play in close proximity to their parents. Like the previous researchers, Bilodeau-Houle, Bouchard, Morand-Beaulieu, Herringa, Milad and Marin (2020) echo those young children with fear show dependent relationships with their parents. This implies insecurities about exploring their environment. In so doing, Armour, Joussemet, Kurdi, Tessier, Boivin and Tremblay (2018) declare that fearful children look up to a parent for guidance and assistance in discovering their environment.

Hussain and Warr (2019) argue that fearful children rely too much on their parents, and as a result, they lack the independence to approach and socialise with others in the environment. In doing so, fearful children show decreased interest in playing and engaging in playful activities with peers. In this way, young children with fear need more guidance and protection from their parents as they lack the confidence to adapt to their environment, particularly in unfamiliar situations (Kiel & Buss, 2011). When young children are confronted with fear, parents reported that they use a reassurance strategy to comfort them (Beato et al., 2017). Most parents report that they assure the children of their safety, cuddle with them, and hug them to make them feel better. In this way, the parents show love, warmth, and emotional support to their children. Jabeen, Anis-ul-Haque and Riaz (2013) emphasise that it is important for parents to offer love, acceptance, and emotional support, as it influences a sense of protection and security in young children.

Verhoeven, Bo¨gels, and van der Bruggen (2012) found that parents of fearful children tend to give less autonomy and encourage avoidant behaviour, thereby minimising the opportunity for young children to develop fearlessness. Furthermore, parents of fearful children have negative expectations about their children's ability to cope with fear, as they expect more avoidant behaviours from them (Silk, Sheeber, Tan, Ladouceur, Forbes, McMakin & Ryan, 2013). In this regard, parents may reinforce the young children's sense of incompetence to face difficulties and, as such, encourage avoidance and dependence on them.

Salcuni et al. (2015) conducted a study on parents' views on fear among young children. These researchers revealed that parents believe that young children are frightened of real-life events such as violence, television news that includes war, bombing, falling from high buildings, weapons, injuries, and animals (Salcuni et al., 2015). Moreover, some parents reported that fear is visible in young children when they suck their thumb, bite fingernails, fidget, whine, and complain.

In the following section, I discuss teachers' understanding of fear among young children.

2.5 TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF FEAR AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN

The temperament of a child plays a significant role in the teacher-child relationship. Young children "with a fearful temperament tend to show inhibition, fear, and distress in response to new objects, situations and people" (Dougherty, Tolep, Bufferd, Olino, Dyson, Traditi & Klein, 2013:577). Penela, Walker, Degnan, Fox and Henderson (2015:1227) reckon that 'behavioural inhibition in children includes shyness around unfamiliar people and withdrawal from new places', thereby showing difficulties in adjusting to teachers and the school environment. In other words, temperamentally fearful children display shy feelings towards their teacher. In this way, Arbeau et al. (2010) maintains that young children with fear show limited interactions with the teacher due to their shy feelings. Arbeau et al. (2010) postulate that fearful children are very quiet and avoid communication with the teacher, as they would rather be invisible. In this way, fearful children are more likely to go "unnoticed by the teacher and they can get less attention, interaction and verbal feedback from their teachers" (Arbeau et al., 2010:260). From this perspective, Breeman, van Lier, Wubbels, Verhulst, van der Ende, Maras and Tick (2018:231) calculate those fearful children are less likely to develop a close teacher-child relationship that comprises of "warm and open communication between children and their teacher, and is concurrently and predictively related to a variety of positive school outcomes for children".

On the other hand, Spilt, Vervoort and Verschueren (2018) reveal that young children with fearful feelings tend to develop dependent teacher-child relationships, which is described as the tendency of young children to show too much emotional attachment and reliance on the teacher. In doing so, young children remain too attached to the teacher as they experience fear of separating from the teacher and exploring the classroom. Young children displaying excessive reliance and dependence on the teacher are shy to interact with other children. As a result, they lose the opportunity to interact with other children, and they are viewed as "strange and teacher's pet", which leads to fear of isolation and loneliness (Spilt et al., 2018:419). From this perspective, Yoleri (2016) conclude that young children who are dependent on the teacher experience emotional insecurities, low self-confidence, and negative attitudes towards learning, thereby increasing the likelihood of poor academic achievement.

In the next section, I discuss the effects of prolonged fear in young children.

2.6 THE EFFECTS OF PROLONGED FEAR ON YOUNG CHILDREN

In this section, I discuss the effects of prolonged fear on young children's socio-emotional development and physical well-being of young children.

2.6.1 Socio-emotional development of young children

Brownell and Kopp (2010:344) describe social and emotional development as the "child's experience, expression and management of emotions and the ability to establish positive and rewarding relationships with others". According to Brownell and Kopp (2010), the social and emotional domain development. In other words, young children aged eight to nine should be able to recognise and make sense of their feelings and be able to read the feelings of others.

Murray and Palaiologou (2018) identified the normal development of emotional skills expected in young children of school-going age (and therefore to this study's focus group) as follows:

- The ability to identify and understand one's own feelings
- To accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others
- To manage strong emotions and their expression in a constructive manner
- To regulate one's own behaviour
- To develop empathy for others; and
- To establish and maintain relationships.

The ability to build relationships begins with the competence to control one's feelings (Bennett & Palaiologou, 2016). In this regard, Rubin, and Ross (2012) warn that young children exposed to prolonged fears struggle to manage their feelings and to make sense of the feelings of peers and others, thereby finding it difficult to build relationships. In this sense, they have a greater likelihood of displaying what Coplan and Ooi (2013:79) call "withdrawal behaviour" in social situations. In other words, they have limited potential to relate with their peers, which may affect their ability to keep friendships, and ultimately find themselves being rejected by peers. It is clear that they lack a social approach motive. This makes it difficult for young children to express their feelings and to comprehend the feelings of others. Ultimately, this results in increased problems of social interactions, and to participate in and benefit from social support (Coplan & Ooi, 2013). In this way, they find themselves faced with "avoidance and isolation from social company" (Kiel & Buss, 2011:47).

Similarly, young children exposed to prolonged fear experience difficulties in adapting to the environment, thereby developing what Arbeau et al. (2010:259) call "social wariness". Social wariness includes onlooking and hovering behaviour. In other words, persistent exposure to fearful events changes young children into passive observers, finding themselves positioned in one area and lacking the ability to participate in social activities. In this way, they are unoccupied, have no interest in participating, and actively involve themselves in activities (Kiel & Buss, 2011). This social wariness prevents young children from developing social competencies such as initiating games (Zhu et al., 2021). Thus, they miss the opportunity of utilising the environment to its fullest capacity. Riesel et al. (2012) agree with these findings by stating that when young children are deprived of the opportunity to initiate and play games, they develop low self-esteem and negative self-perception. A sense of unworthiness and not belonging manifests.

Moller (2017) identifies some of the negative emotional reactions that young children experience as a result of exposure to consistent and prolonged fears. These include:

- Loss of trust
- Bitterness towards others
- Hopelessness
- Loss of sense of belonging
- Low-self esteem
- Dissociation from self
- Unable to have loving feelings
- Learned helplessness
- Mood swings
- Confusion/disgust; and
- Obsessive-compulsive thoughts.

Furthermore, Kiel and Buss (2014) note that young children exposed to prolonged fears tend to engage in 'impulsive behaviour', which entails that they act before seriously thinking about the consequences of their actions. Moller (2017) adds that even a small touch on their arm or a sound may lead to overreaction. Young children are usually prone to pro-social behaviour, including making interactions, playing, and making friends (Kiel & Buss, 2014). However, young children who experience consistent fears usually display shyness and inhibited behaviour, which makes them conduct themselves in socially unacceptable ways

Arbeau et al. (2010). Moller (2017) agrees with Arbeau et al. (2010) and maintains that young children with chronic fears continue living in a fearful environment as they are doubtful and not sure of moving out because of unknown dangers that they may be exposed to. Moreover, they experience difficulty finding a safe place because they are scared to leave home since they do not trust the environment.

Given the above, it is clear that young children who continually live in a fearful environment negatively impact their social and emotional well-being. The subsequent section discusses the effects of prolonged and persistent fear on young children's health and well-being.

2.6.2 The physical well-being of young children

Health is central to a child's physical well-being, which the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2018:12) defines as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". The concept of health also enables a person to meet the demands of daily life (Evans et al., 2012). Evans et al. (2012) define health as a state of balance, an equilibrium that an individual has established within and between themself and their social environment. On the other hand, Huber, Knottnerus, Green, Van Der Horst, Jadad, Kromhout and Smid (2011:82) describe well-being as the "experience of health, happiness and prosperity", which results in a purposeful and accomplished life. Proctor and Dubowitz (2014) assert that a safe environment encourages healthy development where a child experiences emotional security.

Fox and Shonkoff (2012:69) believe that there are certain types of fear that are essential for healthy development and explain this to be the "kind that sharpens the senses; considers trends, possible outcomes and consequences; thinks through options of action; sets up some safeguards, remains alert to warning signs; and chooses precisely what to do when the time calls for action". On the other hand, fear is the cause of physical symptoms such as dizziness, headaches, and stomach-ache in young children. This is a sign that they are exposed to social ills and adversities in their lives, which negatively impacts their well-being and may have a prolonged impact on their development (Shonkoff, Levitt, Boyce, Cameron, Duncan, Fox & Thompson, 2010). Moller (2017) warns that when young children are continuously exposed to fear, they are at a heightened risk of negative health development and well-being, displaying regressive behaviour such as bedwetting and thumb-sucking. Hartinger-Saunders et al. (2012) note that persistent and prolonged fear results in sleeping disturbances such as nightmares and also results in a weakened immune system, which can give way to chronic

pain, feelings of tiredness, and diarrhoea. Fox and Shonkoff (2012) add loss of appetite is a manifestation of constant fear, which ultimately causes loss of weight.

In the next section, I discuss the strategies to support children in coping with fear.

2.7   STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT YOUNG CHILDREN TO COPE WITH FEAR

This section discusses the various support from parents, teachers, and communities, as well as psychological support that can be offered to assist young children in coping with fear.

2.7.1   Parent's strategies to support young children to cope with fear

In this section, I discuss the strategies parents can implement to support young children in coping with fear. Parents play an important role in creating an environment where young children can grow up and develop their full potential without fear and insecurities. Beato et al. (2017) argue that fearful children need supportive parents to encourage them to face their difficulties, thereby assisting them in reducing their insecurities and developing independence to explore and utilise their environment to its maximum capacity. Gagnon et al. (2014) found that supportive and responsive parents are positively linked with more adaptive childhood coping strategies and low levels of fear in young children. In other words, responsive and supportive parents encourage effective coping strategies and increase the child's ability to cope with fear. It is of utmost significance for parents or caregivers to accept and respect the fears experienced by their children. Hiebert-Murphy et al. (2011) believe that parents/caregivers need to validate the fears experienced by their children and also make their children aware that their fears are real, and they are taken seriously. It is prominent for parents to teach young children to know that it is normal to be frightened by dogs, animals, and strangers.

Beato et al. (2017) reiterate that parents need to spend more time with their children, particularly when they experience fearful emotions induced by darkness, wild animals, and thunderstorms. Parents and caregivers paying attention and providing emotional support during fearful experiences assist young children in feeling protected and safe (Jabeen et al., 2013). Similarly, Patel (2019) believes that parent-child interactions play a huge role in the lives of young children. Patel (2019) maintains that when parents spend more time communicating with their children, they create an open relationship that enables them to talk about things/situations that influence fear among themselves. Through a positive parent-child relationship, parents create the opportunity to encourage children to talk about their fearful

feelings (Morris et al., 2017). In this way, parents may interact and ask the child, "You are biting your fingernails; does that mean you feel scared?" In doing so, parents provide young children with an opportunity to speak about their negative feelings and why they are scared. Thus, parents may use this opportunity to reassure and calm down the child.

Patel (2019) reckons that quality time of parent-child interaction assists young children in coping with fear. An increased amount of time parents spends communicating with their children also allows them to ask children about what would help them reduce their fears. Parents and caregivers need to remain patient and read bedtime stories and songs to comfort their children. When parents create a routine that young children can predict things, they can also help them feel secure in their environment. Pope, Butler, and Qualter (2012) found that using play (including dolls) is essential for young children to talk about their fearful experiences. This would help young children to act out their fears and learn various ways of overcoming fearful situations. Moreover, drawings are a safe way for parents to learn about the things/situations influencing fearful experiences among young children (Pope et al., 2012). Gagnon et al. (2014) suggest that parents may ask their children to draw things that make them scared. Then parents can read the story in relation to the child's drawing to assist the child in understanding how things work. For example, if the child drew the thunder and lightning that cause fear in them, then parents may read books to the child to learn about thunder and lightning and also make the child aware that thunder is natural.

Gagnon et al. (2014) discovered that teaching young children to relax and take deep breaths is also a useful strategy. Parents should avoid exposing young children to violent television programmes, including pictures of bombs and shootings, as they would cause fear (Hoge et al., 2017). Parents need to reduce the time their children spend watching television news, which may influence fearful feelings. If the child is scared of the darkness, parents may suggest that the child sleep with the lights on. It is of utmost significance for parents/caregivers to consistently compliment their child for good work. For example, if the child walked by the dog, and did not ask the parent to pick them up, instead the child just held the parents' hand tightly. Parents/ caregivers could praise the child for being brave. Both parents and children can start discussing various ways to assist the child in becoming brave and develop adaptive strategies to cope with fear (Barros, Goes & Pereira, 2017).

Having discussed the strategies that parents can employ to assist young children in coping with fear, in the following section, I discuss the support that teachers can give to young children experiencing fear within a school context.

2.7.2 Teachers' strategies to support young children to cope with fear

In this section, I summarise the strategies teachers can utilise to assist young children in coping with fear. Teachers can play a significant role in creating a safe learning environment where all learners feel warmly welcomed. Teachers must welcome the learners with a smile that would enable them to calm down and experience a sense of belonging in the classroom. White (2016) agrees that teachers who are positive, make eye contact, and give learners attention during interactions, make learners feel accepted in the classroom. Coplan et al. (2011) reckon teachers need to create time for a one-on-one conversation with the child experiencing fear. In doing so, teachers would encourage learners to speak about their feelings and ask about the things/situations that cause fear. This would also enable the teacher to teach children about fear and assist them in being aware of their feelings. When teachers have learned about the things/situations that influence fearful experiences among learners, teachers must give comfort and emotional support to the learners (White, 2016). In this manner, the teacher would create a nurturing and safe learning space for the learners to feel secure.

Furthermore, teachers may encourage learners experiencing fear to work collaboratively in small groups (Nyborg et al., 2022). During group work, the teacher can assign each learner a task to complete, and thereafter, all the learners can discuss their work with peers. In doing so, the teacher would encourage the learners to interact with each other. The teacher must listen to the learners during the interaction and encourage them to listen and cooperate with their peers (Coplan et al., 2011). By doing this, the teacher would encourage the learners to actively participate in the learning activities and support them through positive interactions (Kalutskaya et al., 2017).

Bosacki et al. (2014) believe that it is important for the teacher to use puppets and storybooks to talk about the fearful experiences of the children. Teachers can encourage children to discuss their drawings and depict what makes them scared. Gagnon et al. (2014) reckon that teachers can also use play, and the learner could act out their fears. Thus, teachers and learners could discuss various ways in which learners can be protected and keep themselves safe.

2.7.3   Psychological support from both parents and teachers

In this section, I summarise the psychological support that can be offered to young children to cope with fear and promote the emotional well-being of young children experiencing fear. These support strategies can include the following:

- Speak calmly and firmly to your child to reduce fear
- Pick a calm, undistracted time and gently ask how young children are feeling and make sure to respond to their fear in a calm, consistent, and comforting way
- Try to understand the situation and the causes of fear
- Build a relationship with fearful children based on mutual trust and respect
- Always trust/believe children if they talk about their fears
- Listening and giving children opportunities to talk about what they are feeling can help them to feel secure
- Give courage and comfort: Use simple tools to comfort and calm children, for example, telling stories, singing with them, and playing games. Praise them frequently for their strengths, such as showing courage, compassion, and comfort
- Reassure children that you are prepared to keep them safe
- Practice being a sensitive and responsive caregiver. Young children experiencing fear can benefit significantly from a sensitive, caring adult present in the child's life to provide consistent support to assist children in coping with fear. Young children need quality time with their parents/caregivers and other important people
- Increase children's self-efficacy
- Self-efficacy is a sense of having agency or control - an essential trait during times of fear and uncertainty. Children often feel more in control when they can play an active role in helping themselves; and
- Create opportunities for caregivers to take care of themselves.

The well-being of young children depends on the well-being of their parents and caregivers. It is important for parents/caregivers to take care of themselves, so they have the internal resources to care for others. In this way, parents/caregivers can engage in self-care by staying connected to social support and getting enough rest.

Emphasise strengths, hope, and positivity. Children need to feel safe, secure, and positive about their present and future. Thus, it is important that parents/caregivers assure them.

2.8 CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review provided, it is clear that fear is common in young children and involves negative, unpleasant feelings of fright induced by thoughts or particular circumstances in the environment, thereby influencing a feeling of insecurity (Laporte et al., 2017). From infancy, young children experience various fears that continue throughout the developmental stages. Although young children experience multiple types of fear during each developmental stage, Marks (2013) advises that young children become less fearful as they grow older. In this way, it is evident that young children's fears decline with age.

This chapter highlighted those factors from the home and school environment, as well as the community, play a significant role in causing fear in young children. Temperament and genetic factors also influence fears in young children, as parents who experienced trauma has the potential to pass on their fears to their children, which causes them to be more fearful than others. Moreover, social problems such as neglect, violence, and divorce expose young children to consistent and prolonged fears, which negatively affect their development. Young children experiencing consistent and prolonged fear have difficulty making friends as they are often shy, withdrawn, and socially incompetent. Prolonged fear also has negative consequences on the health of young children as they can also experience bed wetting, nightmares, and a lack of appetite.

The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework with reference to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model. A detailed discussion of various systems comprised of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, which form the ecological environment, is delivered. The exposition of the relevance of various bio-ecological systems of Bronfenbrenner's theory, about delivering the extensive scope through which factors that influence fearful experiences among eight to nine-year-old children are identified.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

From the review of the literature that was presented in the previous chapter, it is evident that there is a connection between fear and young children's development. Although young children experience various types of fears throughout different developmental stages, Gagnon et al. (2014) believe that temperament also has the potential to influence fear in young children. In other words, temperament can also determine how a child reacts to certain situations. Also, interesting to note is the work of Kayyal and Widen (2021), where it was established that as children grow older, they become less fearful. This is due to their cognitive functioning shifts from magical thoughts to logical and realistic thinking, thereby avoiding environments that may induce the experiences of fear. Therefore, it is important that the intensity of fear decreases as the child develops.

Since this study aimed to investigate eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children aged eight to nine years old, it was necessary to understand Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological systems theory explains various factors (systems) involved that may influence a child's experience of fear on various levels, such as the family, peers, and school environment. In the same vein, Guy-Evans (2020) believe that other factors also influence young children in distal proximity to their environment, including the local community, culture, workplace, media, and social ills such as poverty, unemployment, and violence.

In this chapter, an in-depth exploration of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory is described in order to understand how each system influences fearful experiences among young children.

3.2 BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY

This study is underpinned by the view of Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917-2005), who pioneered the theory of ecological systems, explaining that individual development is influenced by face-to-face interactions or indirectly by various factors in the environment. In his model of human ecology, he considered the environment as a "nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). Each layer shows the context in

which development happens (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This author emphasised that for human development to occur, there should be a "person-environment interaction" (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006:793). In other words, the day-to-day activities, and interactions between an individual and their environment that occurs over time form the basis of human development.

Bronfenbrenner further postulated that "human development is driven by social processes, both proximal and distal in relation to the developing child and that these processes are reciprocal, active, and evolving" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994:1643). Moreover, Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) believed that development is a systemic term that refers to "any given variable that is linked to a whole chain of associated influences". In this way, development occurs within a structure that consists of different layers and are situated within proximity to the child that developmental processes influence within the child. According to Guy-Evans (2020), the systematic structure of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory explains how one's setting has the potential to influence another setting and to form a sequence of influences in several places.

Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) posit that the individual is placed at the centre of these layers and is strongly influenced by the persons or settings in their immediate environment and those settings situated at a distance in relation to the child. In this regard, Crowley (2017) highlights the importance of studying child development beyond the immediate environment's influence and extends to include media, workplaces, violence, and low-socioeconomic status.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory suitability to this study was that the factors influencing fearful experiences among young children exist within the environment and are connected (Guy-Evans, 2020). Thus, each level within the ecological setting significantly influences fear among young children (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). In this way, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory assisted in searching for answers to the research question, "What eco-systemic factors influence fearful experiences among young children?" across the various systems.

Therefore, I found Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory (1979) to be the most useful framework for identifying various factors in the environment influencing fearful experiences among young children. The chapter indicated how this theory provides insight into these factors, which he identified as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

3.2.1   Microsystem

The microsystem is the first layer in the bio-ecological model and is defined as a "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). The microsystem is the immediate setting in which the child is significantly influencing and also becomes influenced by the direct interactions and experiences by their family, peers, and school. This system involves face-to-face interactions between the child and their immediate family, including the peers, wherein participation and meaningful knowledge of the environment are directly acquired (Espelage & Swearer, 2010). The relationship and the communications between the child and their closest individuals significantly impact their physical, social, and psychological development (LoBue & Rakison, 2013). The child should be provided with love, a sense of belonging, security, and support within this system. However, suppose the child is not given protection (physical and emotional). In that case, this system may present a risk environment consisting of drug abuse, a child-headed family, homelessness, and family or school violence (Guy-Evans, 2020). The relevance of this system and the study is discussed in section 3.3.1.

3.2.2   Mesosystem

The mesosystem is the second layer and consists of the interactions and relationships between two or more microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bouchard and Smith (2017) describe the mesosystem as the relationship derived from the microsystems in which the child interacts, including the peer network forming contact with the child's family. Moreover, the communications and connections between the teacher and the family also form part of the mesosystem and affect the developing child (Ashiabi & O'Neal, 2015). In this way, the child is actively participating in the interactions and experiences at home that may produce either negative or positive effects on the teacher-child relationship (Kinderman, 2011). For example, a child from a dysfunctional family may lack emotional support, consequently affecting their academic achievement in the classroom.

Similarly, parents may have trouble in the classroom if they are not involved in the child's learning. Moreover, suppose the child is receiving support from the home environment, but the teacher is not creating a welcoming and conducive classroom. In that case, it may expose the child to experience fearfulness that may affect self-esteem and sense of security at school. The mesosystem in this study included the teacher-child relationship and the

relationship between the young child and peers because the child is making direct contact and actively participating in the interactions with them. A detailed discussion of the mesosystem is discussed in section 3.3.2.

3.2.3 Exosystem

The exosystem is the third layer in the bio-ecological model, which encompasses the interactions that don't involve the child directly but still can affect the child even if it happens between the settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). To put it differently, the exosystem "refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). Crowley (2017) views the exosystem as the level consisting of various settings that are at a distance from the child such as unemployment, the local government, and the parent's workplace. The child does not devote time or even play a role in those settings, but these settings still affect their development. The changes that occur in the parent's workplace may affect the child. For example, if the parent is faced with retrenchment, it can negatively influence the child, although they are not directly interacting at the parent's place of work (Weiss & Lopez, 2014). When parents are retrenched from their workplace, such a dilemma suggests that the child's financial and material needs may not be met. This implies that their development may be influenced by the interrelationships that happen in the parent's workplace despite them not taking part in the job. The exosystem is discussed in section 3.3.3 and consists of disadvantaged socio-economic neighbourhoods and their impact on young children's experience of fear. The developing child is not making any direct interaction with the parents' employment, but the child is affected by parental stress as parents struggle to provide financially. Sandstrom and Huerta (2013) acknowledge that parents with high-stress levels are less likely to spend quality time on parent-child interactions and provide children with limited care and attention, thus influencing insecurities and fear in young children.

3.2.4 Macrosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979) described the macrosystem as the fourth and largest layer consisting of laws, beliefs, customs, values, ideologies, economics and political systems, and cultures. He further explains that the macrosystem "refers to the consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (the microsystem; mesosystem and exosystem) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:26). Guy-Evans

(2020:120) views the macrosystem as the "blueprint for a particular culture, sub-culture, or other broader societal context", as its features permeate all the other ecological levels of the environment. From the perspective above, it is clear that the macrosystem is the layer that is situated far away from the interactions and relationships that the developing child is involved in (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). In other words, the developing child has no direct relationship and interactions within the macrosystem. Although the child does not have direct contact with the macrosystem, it is noteworthy that they are still influenced by the events take place in this system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For the purpose of this study, the macrosystem, as discussed in section 3.3.4, includes educational policies and South African laws protecting young children.

3.2.5   Chronosystem

The chronosystem represents the last layer of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory. This level is described by the dimension of time, particularly its relation to the interactions between the child and the micro, meso, and macrosystem and its influence on human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). To put it differently, the chronosystem involves the changing times and the way the child is affected in their environment. In this way, Guy-Evans (2020:123) point out that "the chronosystem is not an environmental system in itself, but a temporal dimension highlighting changes to individuals or environments over time". Hence, the concept of a time system was left out in the original theory of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) and was incorporated only later in the bio-ecological model. Weiss et al. (2014) posit that the time dimension of the chronosystem includes the individual's level and the context of history. The child's phases of development from infancy, childhood, adolescence, and adulthood are represented in every event at the level of the individual. Included in this system are the events of the environment accompanied by all the changes the individual passes through their lifetime. The chronosystem and its relevance to this study are discussed in section 3.3.5, and it includes the support that young children receive from their teachers, parents, and siblings.
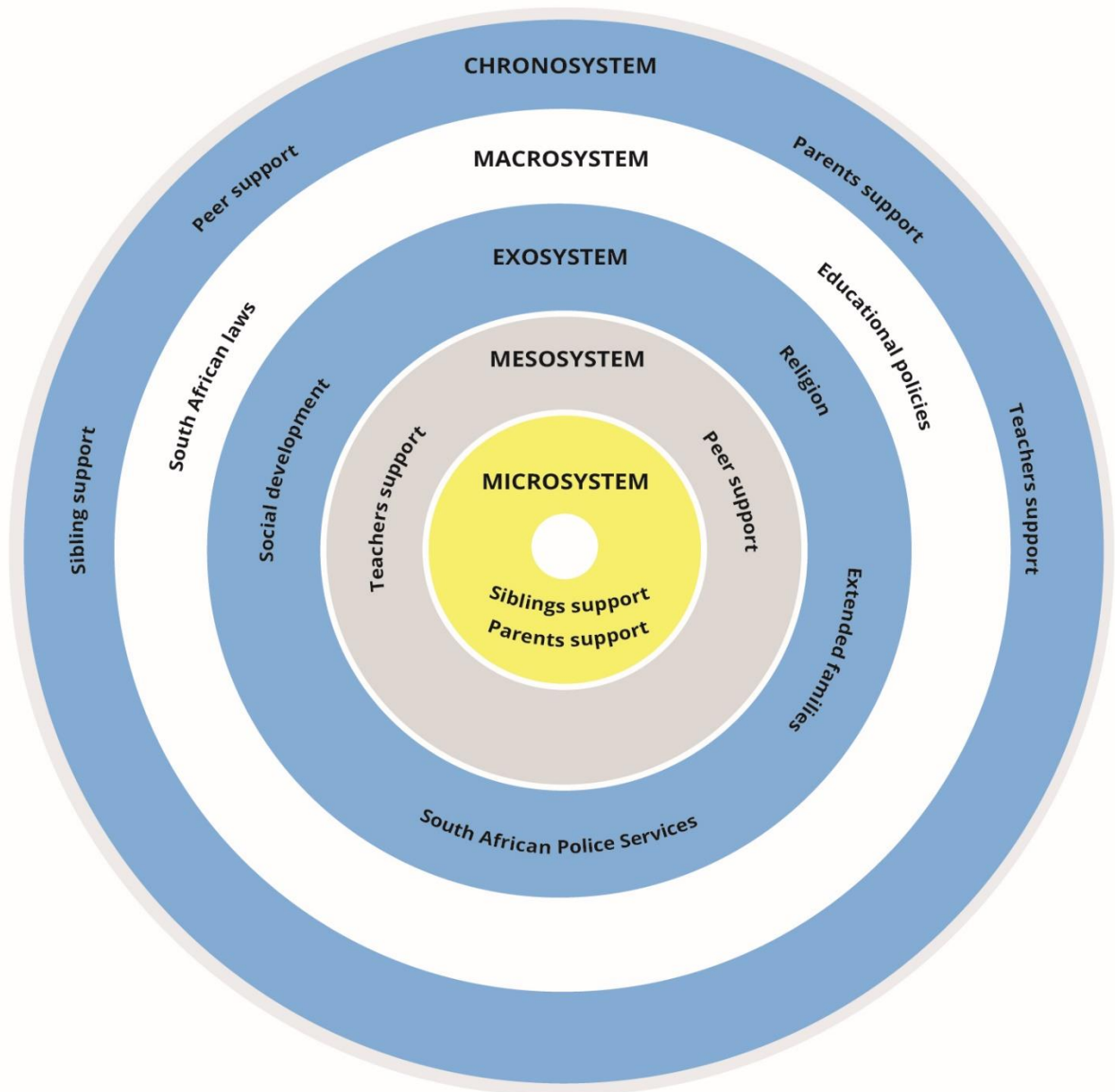
Figure 0-1: Visual presentation of various systems of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

In the following section, I discuss the relevance of Bronfenbrenner's theory and its suitability to this study.

3.3 THE APPLICATION OF BRONFENBRENNER'S BIO-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY TO THIS RESEARCH STUDY

Bronfenbrenner's model highlights the significance of the interrelationship between various systems that interact with one another, resulting in change, growth, and development in social, emotional as well as cultural domains (Bronfenbrenner, 2006). The relevance of this theory relies on the direct and indirect interactions between the child and these various systems in a social context that consequently influences the child's development. In the following section, Bronfenbrenner's theory was applied to my study by indicating how the various systems, represented by certain aspects of a child's development, may induce fear. My discussion highlights the direct and indirect interactions between the developing child and different systems.

3.3.1 The microsystem

Although Bronfenbrenner (2005) explains that the microsystem consists of the direct face-to-face interactions between the developing child and family, teachers, and peers, for this study, I only focused on the family, and the rest is described under the mesosystem. In other words, the microsystem in this study represents the support that the developing child can receive from their family. Bronfenbrenner (2005) postulates that the microsystem involves the immediate environment in which the child develops. Therefore, it involves the direct interpersonal relationship between the parent/s or caregiver/s and the child. The discussion begins with a report on the importance of parent-child interactions. Lastly, I deliberate on the support that young children can receive from their families.

3.3.1.1 The importance of communication in the parent-child relationship

Communication is important in the parent-child relationship (Popov & Ilesanmi, 2015). Ngai, Cheung, To, Liu and Song (2013:91) postulate that communication involves "listening, availability, understanding, mutual respect and emotion", thereby explaining that communication plays a significant role in "establishing and maintaining the relationship between parents and children". Ngai et al. (2013) explain that communication makes the interaction between parents and children strong and effective and contributes significantly to the understanding and mutual acceptance between parents and children.

Gagnon et al. (2014:873) agree and maintain that parent-child interaction lays the foundation for the "child's personality" and contributes to the social development of young children,

thereby explaining the critical role of parents to assist young children to "navigate the transition from home to new environments, where they must engage in social interactions with others". Ngai et al. (2013) reiterate the importance of communication in parent-child interaction, particularly if parents transmit values to their children. Hence "good parent-child communication filled with trust, support and respect can enhance children's autonomy" (Ngai et al., 2013:91). Hennessey (2015) holds a similar view to Ngai et al. (2013) and acknowledge that positive parent-child interactions provide secure attachment and emotional support to young children. This helps to reduce the risk of developing negative feelings such as fear, which has the potential to interfere with children's adjustment to their environment. In this way, parent-child interactions shape a child's temperament and subsequently form how children approach and react to their environment (Popov & Ilesanmi, 2015).

In view of the above, it is evident that positive parent-child interactions play a significant role in moderating negative feelings in young children.

Given that fearful children display shyness and insecurity, Gagnon et al. (2014) argue that parent-child interaction that is supportive and encouraging can help young children to explore unfamiliar situations by acting as a safe haven for children to return to when they experience challenging situations. Moreover, Nozadi et al. (2015:63) postulate that high negative reactions and low self-regulation characterise young children with fearful temperaments. Thus, fearful children can benefit from firm, consistent, and supportive guidance from authoritative parenting. Newman and Newman (2017) coincide with Nozadi et al. (2015) and postulate that fearful children are less likely to have internalising and externalising problems if they are exposed to warm parenting styles. Thus, Jabeen et al. (2013) conclude that fearful children can benefit from authoritative parents because elements of this parenting style predict secure attachment, social competence, self-regulation skills, and prosocial behaviour.

3.3.1.2 The strategies for parents/caregivers to support young children cope with fear

Bronfenbrenner (2005) believe that children's experiences in their home environments and relationships are profound and shape their development. In his theory of the bio-ecological model, he maintains that the children's experiences in the family context should give them a sense of belonging and security (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). In this regard, the parents/caregivers play a vital role in protecting the child against the social problems that influence fearful emotions. Fox, Almas, Degnan, Nelson and Zeanah (2011) conceive the

parents/caregiver as important role players as they need to create a conducive home environment in which young children are given love, emotional support, and comfort necessary for optimal development and well-being. Fox et al. (2011) maintains that love and support received from the family enable young children to feel safe, protected, and secure. On the other hand, Berry and Malek (2017) argue that young children are more likely to feel unwanted and insecure when they lack love and support.

In other words, the presence of a warm, supportive parent/caregiver plays a significant role in protecting young children from fear influenced by the social problems of unemployment, poverty, divorce, violence, and bullying (Hall & Budlender, 2016). Berry and Malek (2017) concede that young children provided with responsive care by their parents/caregivers are less likely to experience insecurities. Thus, the family is the most effective source of help and support that enable young children to cope with fear (Howell, Graham-Bermann, Czyz & Lilly, 2010). Thus, love and emotional support from the parents/caregivers allow young children to cope with social ills in the environment.

The presence of warm and supportive parents/caregivers provide young children with emotional security and the ability to build a trusting relationship (Sherr, Macedo, Cluver, Meinck, Skeen, Hensels & Tomlinson, 2017). Young children with caring and responsive parents/caregivers receive attention, build good relationships with their parents/caregivers, and develop positive self-esteem and autonomy (Singla, Kumbakumba & Aboud, 2015). These researchers believe that parents/caregivers are responsible for understanding the emotions of young children and providing support through listening to them, validating their feelings, and showing empathy and respect (Singla et al., 2015).

Bowes, Maughan, Caspi, Moffitt and Arseneault (2010) found that siblings support young children in coping with fear. Bowes et al. (2010) maintain that siblings provide love and comfort that help young children to survive fear.

Having discussed the support from the microsystem, I go on to discuss the support that the mesosystem can provide to young children experiencing fear.

3.3.2   The mesosystem

The mesosystem represents the developing child's attributes, characteristics, and biological traits that influence direct interaction and relationships with their microsystems (Leonard, 2011). In other words, the mesosystem consists of the developing child and their relationships

with people close to the child (part of the microsystem). The mesosystem involves the interactions and relationships that the developing child forms with the parents, teachers, and peers because the child spends most of the time making direct contact and interacting with each microsystem. This can modify the child's development (Oswell, 2013). Bronfenbrenner (2005) explains that a child from a dysfunctional family may lack emotional support. Still, the school may play a very significant role in providing the support and security necessary for the well-being of the child. This section gives a detailed discussion of the support teachers can provide to young children experiencing fear.

3.3.2.1   The strategies for teachers to assist young children in coping with fear

Teachers play an important role by supporting and providing care to young children. This is done by ensuring that the school is a positive and safe learning environment that promotes the self-esteem of young children (Panter-Brick, Goodman, Tol & Eggerman, 2011). Brackenreed (2010) concede that the experiences and interactions children have at school assist them to build their self-esteem and overcome difficulties that young children face at home. In other words, teachers are responsible for supporting young children and ensuring their positive well-being. White (2016) maintains that positive and supportive teacher-child relationships are important predictors of the socio-emotional well-being of young children experiencing fear. Teachers are responsible for understanding the emotions of the young children and providing emotional support by listening to them, validating their feelings, and showing empathy and respect (Coplan et al., 2011). This can be done through the teacher using a one-on-one strategy to treat each child as a unique individual, encouraging them to talk about their feelings and using a calm voice to ask them about the things that make them scared (Bosacki et al., 2014). In doing so, the teacher is giving each child attention, which enables the children to feel comfortable and continue with the interaction. White (2016) also agrees that young children feel comfortable interacting with teachers who make eye contact and show kindness, sensitivity, and patience. Nilsen (2020) maintains that it is important for teachers to reassure the learners that they truly care and are willing to support them. Nilsen (2020) argues that a positive and supportive relationship with the teacher improves self-esteem and enhances coping skills, thus decreasing isolation and withdrawal in young children. Therefore, a warm and safe classroom environment assists fearful children in calming down and feeling a sense of belonging and security (Bosacki et al., 2014).

Furthermore, Coplan et al. (2011) believe that the best strategy for supporting young children experiencing fear includes implementing social support. The social support strategy involves structuring classroom activities to increase participation by encouraging small-group activities (Nyborg et al., 2022). The use of small group activities encourages collaborative work with other classmates; each child in a group may be assigned a task. In this way, the children would be motivated to listen to each, and the teacher can encourage peaceful interactions among the children (Coplan et al., 2011). These researchers believe that using social support strategies including verbal encouragement, expression of warm approval, and positive reinforcement enable young children experiencing fear to cope (Coplan et al., 2011). The teacher may also encourage collaboration with classmates by praising them for appropriate behaviour as this strategy enhances social and problem-solving skills (Deng et al., 2017).

On the other hand, Webster-Stratton, and Reid (2017) suggest that teachers could use play to talk about fears. Using puppets, stories, and art to talk about fearful experiences may assist young children in coping with fear (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2017). To help young children gain control, the teacher could ask them to act out their fears and talk about their drawings or other creations.

Having discussed the role of the mesosystem in supporting young children presented with fear, in the following section, I discuss the exosystem and the support that can benefit young children experiencing fear.

3.3.3   The exosystem

This section discusses the role of the exosystem in supporting young children experiencing fear. South Africa is a diverse country with various social ills such as divorce, violence, HIV/AIDS, COVID-19, high crime rate, unemployment, and poverty that cause a high level of fear and insecurity in young children. In light of these social problems, it is not enough for the education system to provide teaching and learning only. Schools should be the centre for care and support through protecting and improving learners' health and psycho-social well-being. The Department of Education works in collaboration with the Department of Health and Social Development and police services to protect and address the psycho-social and health needs of the children. This is the network of support providers to assist young children in coping with fear that is caused by the above-mentioned social problems. The exosystem also includes the discussion of the support found from the community, such as the extended families, churches, businesses, and drop-in centres, to assist the child in coping with fear.

3.3.3.1 The role of the department of social development in supporting young children to cope with fear

South African children live in the context of violence, dysfunctional families, poverty, and inequalities. These social problems that young children experience cause emotional problems, such as fearful emotion, which presents them with difficulties in learning effectively in the school environment (White, 2016). In other words, young learners experiencing fear have trouble achieving optimal learning and good academic performance. Therefore, interventions and support by a school social worker are essential to address the fearful emotions experienced by learners to enable them to learn to the best of their potential and achieve good grades. The Department of Education struggles to address the socio-emotional and behavioural problems of young learners experiencing fear (DoBE, 2014). Thus, it is essential that the Department of Education works collaboratively with the school social workers to support learners experiencing fearful emotions (Ramukumba, Rasesemola & Matshoge, 2019). The school social worker is significant in identifying psycho-social barriers and providing appropriate intervention and support (DoE, 2014). In doing so, the school social worker is necessary for providing the young learners experiencing fear the opportunity to participate in academic activities and reach their optimal learning skills.

The school social worker forms a vital part of the educational setting and contributes uniquely to the well-being of young learners experiencing fear and their academic performance in a safe and healthy school context. A joint collaboration with other multidisciplinary team professionals, such as school health nurses, is necessary (DBE, 2012).

The subsequent section provides a brief discussion of the role of healthcare services in supporting young children to cope with fear.

3.3.3.2 The role of healthcare services in supporting young children to cope with fear

The DBE has a strong partnership with the department of health to ensure the good health of all learners in the school environment. The school health programme promotes a healthy learning environment that provides good care for learners' health. In this regard, the appointed school health nurse provides healthcare services that promote learners' physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional well-being (DBE, 2012). In so doing, children with fear can get support from the designated school nurse because long-term exposure to fearful circumstances may result in headaches, stomachaches, nausea, and dizziness (Evans et al., 2012). Therefore, the school nurse is responsible for providing immunisations, and health

check-ups and also supporting children living with chronic illnesses. The school health nurse may also deliver services such as screening and assessment of oral health and personal hygiene education (DBE, 2015). In this way, children's health can be monitored to minimise the possibility that it may interfere with their development.

3.3.3.3 The role of the South African Police Services (SAPS) in supporting young children to cope with fear

Young children spend an increased amount of time in school. Quarles and Quarles (2011) emphasise that young children need to feel safe at school. Kutsyuruba, Klinger and Hussain (2015) agree that young children need a secure, comfortable, and conducive learning environment that enables them to learn effectively. However, learners are presented with bullying at schools that influence the experience of fearful emotions and make them feel less secure (Rettew & Pawlowski, 2016). Govender (2013) reiterate that bullying is a serious barrier in schools and can potentially deprive young learners of education and optimal learning. The DBE considers bullying a severe problem, and measures were put into place to ensure the safety of all learners in the school environment. In this regard, the DBE strongly collaborates with the SAPS to link the schools with local police stations and establish functioning school safety committees. The school safety committee consists of all the school's internal stakeholders, such as the school governing body (SGB), school security personnel, educators, and learner representative. The SAPS, metropolitan police service, social workers, and community police forums are external role players in school safety. The SAPS play a huge role in the school's safety committee to ensure that young learners are protected and free from violence and bullying. The SAPS also provides support by sharing valuable information with learners regarding the consequences of bullying and contact details to report abuse, violence, and other criminal activities.

3.3.3.4 The role of drop-in centres in providing support to young children to cope with fear

Young children in South Africa live in difficult circumstances, including poor housing, lack of health facilities, food insecurity, violence, and a high crime rate (Beckmann & Prinsloo, 2015). Social support programmes play a huge role in intervening and supporting young children experiencing fear due to the social problems that persist in the South African context. The support programmes are important to address particular needs within the community and assist young children in coping with fear. Community social support programmes - such as

the afterschool drop-in centres - play a huge role in providing a safe and conducive environment that gives supervision and protection and offers various support strategies to young children to cope with fear. This is done, through providing academic support, including homework assistance and educational programmes such as extra lessons on life skills subject focusing on the development of social and personal skills in young children. The drop-in centre also provides adequate and nutritional food, child supervision, and mental health and wellness support (such as access to social workers) to assist young children in coping with fear. Researchers such as Durlak, Weissberg and Pachan (2010) and Mampane (2017) confirm that the afterschool programmes found in the community provide young children access to organised and structured activities, including academic assistance and teaching of personal and social abilities that enable young children to cope with fear.

3.3.3.5   The role of extended families in supporting young children to cope with fear

The strong relationships outside the nuclear family may contribute positively to the child's emotional development, thereby developing a sense of togetherness and inseparable. Extended families play a very important role in shaping the meaning of family for these children. Gaydosh (2015) indicates that care and support from relatives or kin can protect the child against the negative results of parental availability. Extended families play a significant role in providing support and teaching young children good life lessons. This is important because, in most societies, there has been a decline in the involvement and closeness of extended families (Tanga, 2013). When children have contact with their extended families, they develop a sense of togetherness and inseparable. This is interwoven with the element of safety and a sense of belonging. Raising a child in a family surrounded by loved ones, parents, relations, and grandparents helps the child with positive development and builds self-esteem and a sense of security (LaFave & Thomas, 2017).

3.3.3.6   The role of religion in supporting young children to cope with fear

Young children in South Africa face stressful situations such as poverty, unemployment, divorce, and violence (Schafer & Ferraro, 2013). Researchers such as Zhou (2018) argue that violence, poverty, unemployment, and divorce influence parents' high stress levels to the extent that they struggle to provide love, support, and protection, which means young children experience fearful emotions. This section focusses on the role of religion in supporting young children to cope with fear. Religion is considered the most useful source of help in supporting young children experiencing fear (Jung, 2018). It provides spiritual and emotional support to

young children who are struggling to cope with the social problems that they are presented with (Jung, 2018). In so doing, religion decreases the negative feelings influenced by social ills and increases a sense of hope and positive self-image (Koenig, Koenig, King & Carson, 2012). Thus, religions encourage young children to develop a positive view of themselves and self-worthiness.

Koenig et al. (2012) agree that religion is positively linked with the emotional well-being of young children. In other words, religion provides young children with the personal and social support needed to cope with fear caused by various social ills. In this way, religion serves as a protective resource for young children by providing personal and social support to buffer the fearful experiences influenced by social problems (Schieman, Bierman & Ellison, 2013). Jung (2018) concedes that the church gives unique opportunities for social support ranging from financial assistance, food parcels, and healing words that provide comfort and hope to young children. Young children receive valuable religious lessons at church that contribute to building self-confidence and a sense of security needed to thrive in difficult life events (Putnam, Campbell & Garrett, 2012). Religion provides young children with a sense of love and being cared for, which fulfil young children's emotional need to feel secure and protected (Jung, 2018).

3.3.3.7 The role of business individuals in supporting young children to cope with fear

Parents from disadvantaged neighbourhoods often face a lack of finances, making it difficult to provide children with proper healthcare and nutrition (Coleman-Jensen, 2012). Small businesses can donate food parcels and clothing to schools to assist children who are exposed to food insecurity. Small pharmacies in the township may also assist with medication for children from poverty-stricken backgrounds (Burge, Wilson & Smith-Crallan, 2012).

Ensuring the safety and well-being of young children requires community members to communicate effectively with the school, particularly the School-Based Support Team (SBST). The involvement of community members such as religious organisations, businesspeople, social workers, and health nurses can work collaboratively to assist children in coping with fear. Epstein (2011) indicates that the child is best supported when the school and families work together with the community members to address social problems and improve the education and well-being of young children.

In the following section, I discuss the role of the macrosystem in supporting young children to cope with fear.

3.3.4 Macrosystem

The macrosystem discusses South African laws and educational policies that support young children coping with fear. The section discusses the constitutional rights protecting young children in South Africa. Furthermore, a brief discussion of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), the education white paper six, and the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP) is given.

3.3.4.1 The role of the constitution of South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996)

The South African constitution of 1996, in section 28, guarantees all children the right to shelter, nutrition, family care, healthcare, and social services (ÁFRICA, 2020). Sandstrom and Huerta (2013:4) agree and maintain that for "young children to develop to their full potential, they need safe and stable housing, adequate and nutritious food, access to medical care, secure relationships with adult caregivers, nurturing and responsive parenting". Young children living in unsafe housing and poor nutrition are more likely to experience unhealthy development and long-lasting effect on their well-being (Johnson & Markowitz, 2018). Stable housing, adequate nutrition, and access to healthcare and social services are the foundation of young children's healthy development and wellness.

The South African constitution further confers the right of young children to be protected against any form of abuse, maltreatment, and neglect (ÁFRICA, 2020). Lack of care and protection has a negative and long-lasting effect on the development and well-being of young children. Young children need to be loved and supported to develop a sense of belonging and security (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). However, if young children lack love and emotional support, they believe that their emotional needs are being ignored and feel unwanted and consequently experience fear, insecurities and unprotected (Webb, 2012). Edwards (2019) adds that when young children feel unprotected, they view the environment as the most dangerous place to live in. Thus, Darling-Churchill and Lippman (2016) reiterate that giving young children love, care, and support in a safe and secure environment enables them to feel protected, which aligns with their constitutional bill of rights.

The South African government needs to ensure that the above bill of rights is fully implemented to allow young childrens' healthy development and optimal well-being in a safe environment.

In the next section, I discuss the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

3.3.4.2 The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

Education on personal and socio-emotional well-being is incorporated into the subject of Life Skills (CAPS, 2012). In this subject, the children learn the socio-emotional well-being, relationships with other people in the environment, and values and attitudes. The study area of personal and social well-being equips learners with knowledge on safety, violence, abuse, and diseases (HIV/AIDS). The personal and social well-being in the Life Skills subject provides the learners with knowledge and competence in dealing with a range of social ills (such as crime, violence, and bullying) that they are facing in their daily lives (Dixon, Janks, Botha, Earle, Poo, Oldacre & Schneider, 2018). Ebersohn and Bouwer (2015) consider violence, divorce, and child abuse as social problems that leave young children with lack of protection, insecurities, and fearful emotion. Therefore, through this study area, young learners are equipped with the skills to identify and regulate their emotions, including fear. The learners also learn the various support strategies to address fearful emotions. In so doing, the learners learn different strategies to keep them safe and reduce fearful feelings. Thus, the Life Skills subject empowers young learners to take safety measures to protect themselves against situations that may cause fear (Prajapati, Sharma & Sharma, 2017). From this perspective, Kruger, Landsberg and Swart (2013) believe that the study area of personal and social well-being in the Life Skills subject can be considered as a coping mechanism for young learners to survive daily hardships and negative emotions, including fear.

In the next section, I discuss the Screening Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS).

3.3.4.3 The role of Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support policy (SIAS)

The policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (SIAS) gives a clear framework to identify, assess, and provide educational programmes that aim to support and enhance the participation of all learners. In the context of this study, young children with fear experience difficulties participating in classroom learning activities (Arbeau et al., 2010). Young children with fear are less likely to speak and engage in classroom activities.

Therefore, they often go unnoticed by the teacher (Penela et al., 2015). In other words, the quiet nature of fearful children limits their ability to become active and engage in classroom activities, thereby becoming invisible to the teacher. In so doing, young children experiencing fear often obtain low academic performance due to non-participation in learning activities.

Thus, implementing the SIAS policy allows young learners experiencing fear to reach maximum participation in classroom activities and improve academic performance. Providing interventions and support strategies would enable young learners with fear to increase their involvement and participation in academic learning.

Furthermore, the SIAS policy recognises the importance of involving parents in the child's education (DBE, 2014). The SIAS policy outlines the significant roles of parents/caregivers as follows:

- To assume responsibility for supporting their children and understand that their children's potential can be optimally developed
- Parents/caregivers need to be involved throughout the intervention processes given to fearful children
- Parents/caregivers need to have access to information regarding varied support strategies needed by their children; and
- Be knowledgeable in terms of their rights and responsibilities in relation to support given to their children (DBE, 2014).

The SIAS policy is not isolated from the Integrated School Health Policy as these policies focus on early identification and intervention to reduce learning barriers. The subsequent section provides a detailed discussion of the role of integrated school health policy.

3.3.4.4 The role of the Integrated School Health Policy in supporting young children to cope with fear

South African children live in environments where they face traumatic experiences such as bullying, violence, neglect, unemployment, poverty, and crime. Hlalele (2012) argues that young children faced with various social ills in their environments often experience fear. Due to this, the education department, the health department, and the department of social development made a joint collaboration to implement the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP) to provide health services and psychosocial support to all learners in school (DBE, 2015). In other words, the Integrated School Health Policy acknowledges that numerous

social problems (such as unemployment, poverty, violence, and child-headed households) negatively affect young children's health, socio-emotional development, and well-being (Menziwa, 2019).

The ISHP focuses on the physical health, social, and emotional well-being of all learners in the school. The ISHP aims to improve all learners' health and psycho-social well-being by reducing health problems in learning so that learners can learn optimally and obtain good academic performance. Dibakwane and Peu (2018) reckon that the ISHP enables professionals such as health nurses to access the school and provide health services to learners. In the context of this study, Moller (2017) reveals that an excessive and prolonged experience of fear in young children may result in somatic symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, chest pains, and nausea. Therefore, health nurses would identify and monitor the health of young children with fear to prevent health barriers from interfering with their learning abilities (DBE, 2012). Thus, effective implementation of the ISHP plays a significant role in supporting young children experiencing fear through providing health services and psychosocial support. In so doing, the ISHP supports the schools in creating a safe and secure environment conducive to young learners experiencing fear of reaching their optimal learning.

In the subsequent section, I discuss the role of education white paper 6 in supporting young children experiencing fear.

3.3.4.5 The role of Education White Paper 6 in supporting young children experiencing fear

The aim of Education White Paper 6 was to extend the accessibility of education by making it inclusive to all learners in the school context (DBE, 2001). All South African schools had to adapt teaching and learning strategies towards an inclusive education and training system. The Education White Paper 6 provides a guideline on various strategies teachers could implement in the classroom to accommodate the different learning needs of all learners (DoBE, 2015). In so doing, the policy on Education White Paper 6 focuses on offering equal opportunity for all learners to access good and quality education.

The policy acknowledges that in the South African context in which young learners live, they are faced with various social ills, including unemployment, poverty, violence, and neglect, that may serve as learning barriers (DBE, 2001). Hlalele (2012) advises that social barriers such as child-headed households, neglect and violence often cause fear in young children.

The Education White Paper 6 outlines various support and methods of implementation that teachers ought to implement in the classroom. Furthermore, the policy recommends that teachers need to change their attitudes, behaviour, teaching, and learning methods and the learning environment to meet the learning needs of all learners (DBE, 2001). White (2016) concedes that teachers need to form a close relationship with young children as children feel comfortable interacting with kind, patient, and supportive teachers. Young children often feel safe and secure with teachers who display "respect, listening to them, talking to them, and making eye contact with them during everyday communication" in the classroom (White, 2016:30).

Therefore, the Education White Paper 6, enables teachers to change their attitude and create a safe learning environment for young learners to participate in the classroom and learn effectively.

3.3.5   The Chronosystem

In this section, I discuss the strategies teachers, parents, and siblings can implement to support young children in coping with fear. Young children spend an increased amount of time with teachers and parents. Therefore, they play an important role in creating an environment where young children can grow up and develop their full potential without fear and insecurities. Beato et al. (2017) argue that fearful children need supportive teachers and parents to encourage them to face their difficulties, thereby assisting them in reducing insecurities and developing independence to explore and utilise the environment to its fullest capacity. In other words, responsive and supportive parents encourage effective coping strategies and increase the child's ability to cope with fear. The chronosystem involves the parents, siblings, and the teacher and the time they spend supporting the child to cope with fear.

Table 3-1 on the next page provides the support teachers, parents, and siblings can offer young children experiencing fear.

Table 0-1: The support teachers, parents, and siblings can offer to young children experiencing fear (Gullone, 2000:430)

Type of fear	• Teacher support	• Parent support	• Sibling support
Fear of being alone	• Read the storybook to the children (related to things that cause fear in them). • Give more knowledge and possible solutions • Discuss ways to address fear	• Comfort the child • Give assurance • Ask the older brother to sit with the child • Give more knowledge and possible solutions e.g switch on the light	• Sit with the child who is experiencing fear • Switch on the light • Give favourite food and water
Fear of domestic violence	• Read the storybook to the children (related to things that causes fear in them). • Give more knowledge and possible solutions • Discuss ways to address fear	• Comfort the child • Give assurance • Call the police	• Ask the older sibling to call the police • Seek help from neighbors/extended families and other community member
Fear of bullying	• Give more knowledge about the effects of bullying • Create anti-bullying strategies • Invite the Police officers to give more knowledge about the consequences of bullying	• Comfort the child who witnessed bullying • Report bullying at the school	• Protect the child against bullying • Report the bullying to school
Fear of dangerous weapons	• Give knowledge and possible strategies • Comfort the child in the classroom	• Protect the child against community violence • Comfort the child	• Protect the child from community violence • Keep the child away from community violence

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Type of fear	• Teacher support	• Parent support	• Sibling support
Fear of darkness, illnesses and animals	• Teach the children that animals such as rats and ducks are not dangerous • Read the storybook to children about day/nighttime fears and discuss the solution such as switching on the lights at night to reduce fear. • Give knowledge of addressing fears through using different videos/pictures	• Singing with them and playing games. • Praise them frequently for their strengths, such as showing courage, compassion, and helpfulness • Reassure children that you are prepared to keep them safe. • Provide them with correct information through valid sources • Spend quality time with your children, it makes them feel loved and secure, and shows them that they are important.	• Ask the older brother to sleep with the child at night with the lights on. • Tell the child that the rat and ducks will not cause any body harm. • Sit with the child in her bedroom if the parents are fighting in their own bedroom. • Play various games with the child
Fear of domestic violence and fear of bullying	• Listen to the children and provide comfort and referrals to the local social support services in the community. • Regarding bullying, the teacher can comfort and reassure the child that the school is safe. Also, address the issue with the bullies.	• Spend quality time with the child and show him/her love and support. This helps to reduce fears and assist them in developing a sense of security	• Sleep with the child and comfort him/her during nightmares. • Protect the child against bullies
Fear of the teacher	• Listen and validate children's fear, comfort and re-assure the children that they should not be scared of you. Speak with soft voice and pay	• Build a good relationship with the teacher. • Be willing to listen and encourage the child to show	• Assist the child to show good behaviour in the classroom • Sleep with the child and comfort him/her during the nightmares

	attention to all children in the classroom.	good behaviour in the classroom.	
Fear of the ghosts and Monsters	• Read stories of day/nighttime fears and discuss the solutions to fear. • Give more knowledge about the non-existence of a ghost	• Ask the older brother to sleep with the child. • Comfort and reassure the child of her safety	• Sleep with the child with the lights on. • Comfort and assure the child that the ghost is not real.
Fear of thieves	• Give the children knowledge to avoid playing in the street if it is dangerous. • Give them the knowledge to lock themselves in the house	• Protect the child • Comfort and assure the child of safety • Involve the police for their protection	• Sit with the child in the house
Fear of kidnapping	• Teach the children not to be with strangers.	• Protect the child • Comfort and assure the child of safety	• Protect the child. • Play in safe places.

3.4 SUMMARY

The focus of this study was to explore the ecosystemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children. In this chapter, the researcher drew on Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory as it underpinned this study to gain a deeper understanding of how each system could provide support to young children in coping with fear. In each level of Bronfenbrenner's theory, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, the researcher discussed the various useful support strategies to assist young children experiencing fear. The researcher believes that parents/caregivers need to create a conducive home environment to support young children and enable them to experience feelings of love, acceptance, and protection. The support of a caring and kind teacher is also significant in helping young children buffer the negative feelings influenced by social problems in the South African context. The teacher plays a huge role in enhancing the self-esteem and sense of security in young children experiencing fear by giving knowledge, comfort and assurance. The resources from the local community and the collaboration between teachers, social workers, and police officers are significant in supporting young children to cope with fearful feelings. Effective implementation of the South African laws that protect all children's rights is paramount to reducing fear in young children.

In the next chapter, I discuss the research methodologies, paradigm, and data collection processes that were useful in answering the research questions.

CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter clearly indicated that this study is underpinned by the bio-ecological systems theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory has been used within the social sciences as a methodological framework that indicates the direct and indirect interactions between the child and the various system in a social context that consequently influences the child's development. Eco-systemic factors have to be considered in any instance of an inquiry because such factors may influence a child's experience of fear and also on various levels, such as the family, peers, and school environment. As a methodological framework, it is useful to explore "How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children?" across the various systems.

In this chapter, the research design and methodology that has been used to explore the eco-systemic factors that influence the experience of fear in young children were deliberated. A research design indicates the strategy that the research process followed to investigate theories, methods, and instruments on which a particular study was based (Maree, 2016). Creswell (2014) maintains that research design provides information on the nature of the study and the direction that guided the researcher in conducting the study. The research design is the complete structure that was followed to plan this qualitative study, which assisted the researcher in exploring and understanding what eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children.

In discussing the research methodology and design, a comprehensive explanation of the research paradigm, the research approach, the sampling method for selecting participants and the research sites, data collection and analysis techniques, the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations are delivered. However, before discussing the above-mentioned aspects, it is important to provide the main research questions that this study intended to answer.

4.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research study intends to find answers to the following research questions:

4.2.1　Primary Research Question

How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children?

4.2.2　Secondary Research Questions

- What are the understandings and experiences of fear among young children?
- What strategies do parents use to minimise the experiences of fear in young children?
- How do teachers address the experiences of fear in learners?
- What do young children believe to be solutions to fearful situations?
- What are the key elements for a teacher-training programme to support young learners' fearful experiences?

Since this study used a qualitative research approach, both primary and secondary research questions are presented as 'how' and 'what' questions. Therefore, the answers or responses are in words and not in numbers. In this regard, the appropriate research plan is needed to facilitate the process of seeking the answers to the research questions. The following section provides a detailed explanation of the research design employed in this study.

4.3　RESEARCH PARADIGM

Denzin and Lincoln (2018:47) define a paradigm as "a set of beliefs that guide the action". Nieuwenhuis (2015) posits that the paradigm revolves around the researcher's worldview about a particular belief or the assumptions that a researcher holds in relation to reality. From a philosophical viewpoint, Taylor, and Medina (2013) describe the paradigm as the nature of reality (ontology). Consistent with the previous authors, the paradigm is the philosophical assumptions and beliefs about the world and the nature of reality that the researcher brings to a research study. To put it differently, a paradigm provides the researcher with appropriate tools to point out and communicate their specific point of view and assumptions. In planning a research design, a researcher needs to ensure that the research paradigm is in line with their point of view regarding the nature of truth (Creswell, 2018). Creswell (2018) explains that the paradigms influence how the research study was carried out. Hence, Lincoln, Lynham and Guba (2011:5) and Mertens (2010) postulate that a paradigm is a set of philosophical beliefs that guide the researcher's perception of the world and provide the framework that directs the researcher's activities. In this regard, Denzin, and Lincoln (2018) hold the view that a paradigm shapes the research approach, the type of knowledge that can be generated, and how the knowledge is produced. From the above perspective, it is clear

that a paradigm provides the researcher with the information that would assist them with a choice to underpin the research study within a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approach.

Merriam (2009:4) classified the following three philosophical orientations, which provide guidance to a scientific inquiry:

- The positivist paradigm represents the knowledge acquired through scientific and experimental research that is objective and quantifiable;
- The interpretive paradigm represents the knowledge that is based on the lived experiences of individuals;
- The critical research paradigm represents the knowledge that is produced through an ideological critique of what is researched.

This research study was situated within an interpretivist paradigm, as the intention was to generate knowledge by allowing the participants to narrate their own subjective and lived experiences of the factors that influence fearful experiences among young children (Creswell, 2018). In other words, I gave the participants the space to use their own words to respond to the research questions by relating their experiences to their lives. Interpretivism emphasises that there is no single truth, and that social reality is not objective because knowledge is personally experienced (Hammersley, 2012). In other words, the interpretivist paradigm is based on the belief that "reality is multi-layered and complex" as participants can give different interpretations to a single phenomenon, and social reality is interpreted from their own unique viewpoint (Mack, 2010:26). Therefore, an interpretivist paradigm undertakes that reality is socially constructed and is "best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations" of the participants (Bhattacherjee, 2012:103). Fouche and Schurink (2011) agree with Bhattacherjee (2012) that participants need to understand the world in which they live in, as social reality cannot be experienced in isolation from the social context in which it is embedded. Thus, participants can interpret social reality by associating their subjective meanings as they relate and interact with their environment. From this perspective, it is clear that an interpretivism researcher does not view the world from an objective stance but rather from a subjective point of view wherein participants construct the world, each participant giving their understanding of reality as they have different interpretations (McKenna, Richardson & Manroop, 2011).

To obtain answers to "what eco-systemic factors influence fearful experiences among young children", it was imperative for me as an interpretivist researcher to understand the socially constructed realities and participants' subjective viewpoints and their meanings throughout the process of this research study (Creswell, 2018). This was done by giving the participants an active role in their natural setting to provide their feelings, opinions, and views of what eco-systemic factors influence fearful experiences among young children. Therefore, I relied on participants' subjectivity to answer the research questions in this study.

4.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

In planning the research study, Creswell (2018:5) reiterates that a researcher must choose "philosophical worldview assumptions that they bring to the study" and match it to the "research design that is related to this worldview, and the specific methods or procedures of research that translate the approach into practice". From this perspective, Maree (2016) describes the research approach as the structured plan to carry out the study. Creswell (2018:4) concurs Maree (2016) and explains that the research approach is the "plan or proposal to conduct research, which involves the intersection of philosophy, research design and specific methods". In this regard, this research study followed a qualitative approach to provide space for young children to narrate their experiences of fear and present a holistic view from their individual perspectives of the factors that influence fearful experiences in particular circumstances. In other words, I employed the qualitative approach to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the subjective meanings that the grade three learners ascribed to them as influencing the experiences of fearfulness. The research questions that this study sought to answer required responses that could be best "generated through open-ended questions" (Creswell, 2018:3). Yin (2016) concurs with Creswell (2018) and identified the following five features of qualitative research:

- Studying the meaning of people's lives in their real-life context
- Capturing the views and understandings of the participants in a study
- Embracing the real-world contextual conditions
- Contributing new knowledge that may assist in explaining social behaviour and thinking; and
- Acknowledging the value of collecting data from different sources of evidence rather than relying on a single source alone.

In addition, Silverman (2020) distinguished between quantitative and qualitative research. Silverman (2020) explains that quantitative research uses numbers and words generated from closed-ended questions. In contrast, qualitative research is concerned with a verbal description of real-life context to understand and interpret the meanings that the participants attach to themselves. Qualitative research involves the socially constructed nature of reality, emphasising the relationship between the researcher and the object of study. Several authors, including Creswell (2018) and Marshall and Rossman (2016), agree with Creswell (2018) on the basic characteristics of qualitative research. My research was qualitative. The following table shows this qualitative research study's core characteristics and applicability.

Table 4.1: Core characteristics of qualitative research and applicability to this study

Core characteristic	Applicability to this study
Natural setting: Data are collected from participants in their natural setting and not in a laboratory or a simulated environment.	Grade three learners were asked to draw pictures of fearful experiences and speak about them while drawing. Grade three teachers were interviewed in the natural setting in which they were employed. Parents of the chosen children were also interviewed regarding their approaches to understanding and supporting their children. Participants were not taken into simulated situations in order to conduct the interviews.
Researcher as a key instrument: Qualitative researchers collect data themselves, and they also play the role of being the research instrument.	For me, as a researcher, to gather data that provided answers to the research questions being investigated, participants who gave consent to take part in the study were interviewed personally by myself as a researcher and in this way, I assumed the role of being a research instrument.
Multiple sources of data: Qualitative researchers employ various sources for data collection, such as interviews,	Data was collected through drawings, observations and individual interviews with grade three learners. The study also collected

Core characteristic	Applicability to this study
observations, documents, and audio-visual devices.	data from grade three teachers and parents, and these various participants served as multiple sources from which data was collected.
Participants' meanings: The researcher will put her primary attention on the meanings that participants attach to the phenomenon of interest.	As a qualitative research, this study focused on the meanings that participants had ascribed to fearful experiences among young children, which children expressed through drawings, observations, experiences and perceptions of teachers and parents relating to the phenomenon of interest.
Emergent design: The research design in qualitative research is subject to constant change as varying circumstances present themselves during the fieldwork.	The individual interviews with grade three parents were initially envisaged to be conducted at schools. Participants who could not avail themselves at school received telephonic interviews, and some received the interview schedule via email. This was done to capture their perspectives on the research problem, as from the interpretivist paradigm, social reality is based on multiple human experiences and is "best studied within its socio-historic context by reconciling the subjective interpretations" made by different participants (Bhattacherjee, 2012:103).
Reflexivity: The researcher should constantly reflect on how their personal background, culture and experiences can potentially influence their role in the study as well as their interpretation and the	By virtue of being in the education profession as a researcher in this study, I constantly reflected on how my experience in the profession could influence the direction of participants' responses.

Core characteristic	Applicability to this study
meaning they attach to the data that is collected.	
Holistic view: In an endeavour to develop a comprehensive view of the research problem being studied, qualitative researchers adopt multiple perspectives and identify numerous factors relating to a situation so that an enhanced picture of the phenomenon of interest can be drawn.	The use of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory as a methodological framework enabled the researcher to explore and identify eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children within the various levels of the ecological environment. This also facilitated gaining an enhanced and holistic view of the research problem, as data was based on different perspectives of the various participants from various socio-historic backgrounds and was collected through drawings and semi-structured interviews.
Inductive data analysis: Patterns, categories and themes that are inferred from data will be arranged into more abstract information and, in the process, put together a "comprehensive set of themes" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).	The recurring patterns that emerged from the interview transcripts of the various categories of participants resulted in the creation of sub-themes and themes from which inferences /interpretations relating to the findings of the study were made.

In qualitative research, a number of research approaches exist within which their research designs can be accommodated. Various authors discussed different research approaches, which they classified into categories ranging from three through five to 28 (Creswell, 2014; Creswell, 2018). This study employed a case study approach. I investigated the eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children. A case study approach was suitable for this study, as it allowed me to gain "an in-depth understanding of each case" (Yin, 2014:65).

In the following section, I discuss the case study approach and its applicability to the research study.

4.5 CASE STUDY

A research design indicates the strategy the research process follows to investigate theories, methods, and instruments that a particular study is based on (Maree, 2016). Creswell (2014) maintains that a research design provides information on the nature of the study and the direction that guides the researcher in conducting the study. The research design is the complete structure that is followed to plan a qualitative study, which assists the researcher in exploring and understanding the research questions - How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children. Since this study used the interpretivist paradigm, I found the case study design to be most suitable because the case study method aligns very well with the interpretivist paradigm (Creswell, 2018).

Yin (2017) and Merriam (2009) are prominent authors who play a significant role in influencing researchers to employ the case study method in a qualitative research study. In defining a case study method, Yin (2014) holds the view that a case study is an approach that a researcher employs to investigate a particular inquiry by observing and generating knowledge from lived experiences of the participants in their natural context. On the other hand, Stake (2003) upholds that a case study focuses on studying a particular case rather than the methods of how a specific case is being studied. In other words, Stake (2003:45) considers a case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances". Merriam (2009), like the previous authors, defines a case study as an approach that involves what is being studied and discovering meanings from the actual experiences of the participants involved. Merriam (2009) emphasises that a case study involves an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. Merriam (2009:40) views a case study as an object to be studied and reiterates that a case study focuses on a specific thing and that the outcome of an inquiry should be "descriptive and heuristic in nature". Both Stake (2003) and Merriam (2009) capture the definition of a case study method from a qualitative perspective by maintaining that a case study provides the researcher with an opportunity to learn and make sense of a particular phenomenon in a real context.

Furthermore, a case study is a research design that is based on gaining a deeper understanding when a researcher is investigating a "single individual, group or event"

(Creswell, 2018:14). A case study method, as a research approach, assists the researcher to explore, investigate, and make sense of complex issues in a real-life context through using different tools to collect data. In this study, a case study method was found to be an appropriate research method that assisted me as a researcher in gaining concrete, contextual, and in-depth knowledge about a particular real-world subject. In other words, I choose a case study method to assist me in exploring and gaining an in-depth understanding of the eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children. It is also significant to note that a case study method in a qualitative approach undertakes a relativist ontology, which implies that there is no single and objective truth, but human beings interact with each other and construct their own truth; thus, the reality is relative and created by individuals in a real-life context (Yin, 2015).

My philosophical paradigm influenced the choice of a case study method. Hence, a case study method was understood from an interpretivist point of view, which implies that there are multiple realities and meanings that a researcher co-creates to generate knowledge (Lincoln et al., 2011; Yin, 2014). Therefore, a case study method allowed young children to construct their own reality based on their lived experiences of the factors influencing fearful experiences in their real-life situations. As a researcher, I was close to the participants in their real-life setting (school) to seek answers to the research question: what eco-systemic factors influence fearful experiences among young children? Since the case study method aims to generate knowledge, I interacted and communicated with the participants to make a significant connection and became immersed in the field (Creswell, 2018).

Moreover, this study used a multiple case study method, which is an extensive study involving several instrumental case studies to gain a deeper understanding of more than one phenomenon. Yin (2015) asserts that a researcher chooses a multiple case study method to examine the differences between cases. In other words, a multiple case study method allows the researcher to study each case's processes and outcomes and to identify how each case might be affected by different contexts, environments, and particular circumstances (Creswell, 2018). The use of a multiple case study method assisted me in describing and comparing data in terms of the differences between each individual case and how different socio-economic statuses influenced fearful experiences among young children (Creswell, 2018). As this study involved three different schools, only 12 grade three learners' drawings formed part of the study, from which I only selected four learners' drawings from each school and formed a case. In other words, this study consisted of three different case studies. In so

doing, using multiple case studies made the results much more powerful. It provided extensive descriptions and explanations of eco-systemic factors influencing fearful experiences among young children than the use of a single case would provide.

Yin (2015) identified three types of case study methods in multiple case studies, namely: exploratory case studies, which are carried out prior to the identification of a research question; explanatory case studies, which involve the causal case studies in which the information from the cases is related to a theoretical perspective; lastly the descriptive case studies which follow a descriptive theory throughout the process of the study. I followed a descriptive case study to gain insight into young South African children's lived experiences of situations that make them fearful. The description that the researcher gives may represent what participants have experienced and how they have experienced it. McMillan and Schumacher (2014:32) maintain that a "case study method describes the meanings of the lived experience of the participants involved". For this reason, McMillan, and Schumacher (2014) warn that the data that the researcher collects needs to be based on the descriptions of the participants' meaning of their lived experiences, free from all biases.

In the subsequent section, I present a discussion on the methods I used to select the research sites and the selection of participants. The role of the researcher and the processes I used to gain access to the research sites are explained in detail.

4.6   RESEARCH METHODS

Research methods provide information about where and how the researcher gathered data and the participants involved in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The researcher's choice of the methods used to carry out the study was influenced by the nature of the research problem studied and its specific context. Research methods address issues such as collecting, analysing, interpreting information, and building research relationships with the involved participants in the study. In the following sections, I discuss the selection of research sites and participants, the research instruments used for data collection, and the data collection and analysis processes.

4.6.1   Sampling method for the selection of participants

Non-probability sampling is a method used in a qualitative research study in which not all the population members have an equal chance to participate (Creswell, 2018). Merriam (2009) describes non-probability sampling as a sampling technique used by the researcher to select

a set of data or elements from the larger population based on a subjective decision. This research study employed a non-probability sampling technique instead of random sampling, and not all individuals from the targeted population had equal opportunity to participate in the study. Moreover, the study used the purposive sampling method, which is a type of non-probability sampling based on the researcher's decision of the individuals considered suitable for the study (Merriam, 2009). In other words, the researcher employed purposive sampling based on the specific characteristics that the participants held and that they would provide the most suitable data about the research study. Therefore, this research study used purposive sampling as the most appropriate sampling technique to select relevant participants that would provide rich data to assist in answering the research question: How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children? Maree (2016) explains that purposive sampling requires that participants have specific features that will form the criteria for the selection of the sample.

This research purposefully selected the grade three learners whose parents have consented to participation in the study. The research activity formed part of the theme, 'My emotions', in the subject of Life Skills (CAPS, 2011). According to the Washington State Department of Early Learning (2012), grade three learners are considered the older group in the foundation phase and can understand their feelings and make meaningful drawings. Although all grade three learners from three different schools participated in the study, the researcher purposefully selected only 12 learners' drawings from all the schools that depicted fear the best. Then, each of the learners was asked to explain their drawings, and the researcher recorded what the learners said and wrote it down.

Furthermore, the study employed the convenience sampling method to select three grade three teachers (one from each school) to participate in the interview. The study involved 12 parents in understanding the factors influencing fearful experiences in young children. Convenience sampling was considered the most feasible method to sample grade three teachers as they were readily available at the school and easy to access (Maree, 2016). The involvement of three grade three teachers and 12 parents in this study assisted in collecting rich and in-depth data about the experiences of fear in young children (Creswell, 2018). In other words, the grade three teachers and parents became participants in this study to provide their understanding of the factors that influence fearful experiences in young children. The grade three teachers and parents who met the following selection criteria below were

taken through the contents of the informed consent letter and were asked for voluntary participation in the research study.

Table 4-1 on the next page presents the selection criteria of the participants.

Table 0-1: Selection criteria for participants

Participants	Criteria
Grade three learner	1. Be a grade three learner who drew a picture that best depicts fearful emotion. 2. The grade three learner must be able to explain the drawing and the fearful situation. 3. A grade three learner whose parents are willing to participate in the study.
Teachers	1. Be a qualified grade three classroom teacher. 2. The teachers should be currently employed full-time in primary schools. 3. Be willing to participate in the research study.
Parents/caregivers	1. Be willing to participate in the study. 2. Be a parent/caregiver whose child drew the picture that best depicts a fearful situation.

4.6.2 Grade three learners as participants in this study

In this study, the researcher decided to involve grade three learners from three different schools as they are considered the older group in the foundation phase, and they can understand their feelings and make meaningful drawings (Washington State Department of Early Learning, 2012). In the first grade three class, there were 18 learners; in the second class, there were 18 learners; and in the last class, there were 22 learners. All three grade three classes from different schools participated in the study. However, only four learners from each school were purposefully selected according to the specific criteria. Therefore, the study involved 12 grade three learners' drawings that depicted fear the best. As a researcher,

I first read a story, "What makes me fear", to all the learners. The story explained how a young child experienced fear in different situations and various factors that induced fearfulness in her. We had a conversation about different situations learners are faced with that could potentially induce fear. Then, followed by the drawing activity, an explanation of their drawing helped me to gain valuable information about what causes fear in them.

The following checklist was used as a guideline to identify signs of fear in learners' drawings.

Table 0-2: Checklist of the features of fear

√	Checklist of the features of fear in children's drawings
	Drawing a very tiny person /Small drawings of a human figure
	Small and short hands of a person
	Shading of the whole body of a person
	Excessive darkening of the picture
	Confining the drawing to a small space
	Child's drawing inside the frame
	Squint eyes

The above checklist helped me to identify the drawings of grade three learners, and the researcher recorded the data of the observations. The researcher recorded the learner's descriptions of what they had drawn and observed emotions and expressions during the drawing process.

Table 0-3: Profile of children participants

Learner participant	Age	Gender	Race	Type of family	Socio-economic status	Occupation of parents Father and mother	
L1	9	Girl	African	Both parents	Low	Vendor	Vendor
L2	8	Girl	African	Both parents	Low	Unemployed	Sales consultant
L3	9	Girl	African	Both parents	Low	Bricklayer	Vendor
L4	9	Boy	African	Both parents	Low	Handyman	Domestic worker
L5	9	Girl	Indian	Divorced	Middle	Electrician	SEESA admin

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Learner participant	Age	Gender	Race	Type of family	Socio-economic status	Occupation of parents Father and mother	
L6	8	Girl	African	Both parents	Middle	Businessman	Sales consultant
L7	9	Boy	African	Both parent	Middle	Housewife	Police officer
L8	8	Boy	African	Both parents	Middle	Handy man	Store manager
L9	9	Girl	African	Both parents	High	Production manager	Accountant
L10	9	Girl	African	Both parents	High	Engineer	Professional nurse
L11	8	Boy	Coloured	Living with both parents	High	Bank manager	Sales consultant
L12	9	Girl	African	Living with both parents	High	Ford operator	Sales executive

Table 0-4: Profile of parent's participants

Gender	Participant	Race	Number of children in the family	Socio-economic status	Occupation of parents	
					Male	Female spouse
Female	P1	African	Three children	Low	Vendor	Vendor
Male	P2	African	Two children	Low	Unemployed	Sales consultant
Female	P3	African	One child	Low	Bricklayer	Vendor
Female	P4	Indian	Three children	Low	Handyman	Domestic worker
Female	P5	African	Four children	Middle	Electrician	SEESA admin
Female	P6	African	One child	Middle	Businessman	Sales consultant
Female	P7	African	Four children	Middle	Housewife	Police officer
Female	P8	African	Two children	Middle	Handyman	Store manager
Female	P9	Coloured	Two children	High	Production manager	Accountant
Female	P10	African	Two children	High	Engineer	Professional nurse
Female	P11	African	One child	High	Bank manager	Sales consultant
Male	P12	African	Two children	High	Ford operator	Sales executive

Table 0-5: Profile of teacher's participants

Participant	Socio-economic status	Type of school	Description
T1	Low	Public primary	The teacher is a female. She is 36 years old. She taught for six years
T2	Middle	Former model C	The teacher is a female. She is 39 years old and has been teaching for eight years.

T3	High	Private	The teacher is a female. She is 62 years old. She has 23 years of teaching experience.

4.6.3   Selection of the research sites

To obtain the views from different sections of the South African population, I used convenience sampling to select three schools to gather data on the factors influencing fearful experiences among young children. South Africa is considered the second most unequal society in the world. Therefore, three schools from different socioeconomic backgrounds were selected to form part of the research sites for this research study. The first school was situated within a township, located in a geographical area where most learners live in poverty-stricken communities. Because townships are overpopulated, this school consisted of a large number of learners ranging between 40-49 in the classroom. The second school was the inner-city school located in the eastern suburb of Pretoria, which consisted of a class size of 35 grade three learners in the classroom. According to Horn (2021), the Pretoria inner city is the primary productive heart of the metropolitan economy as it contains the central area of its administration, business, main markets, services, and utilities required in addition to the residential areas around it. The last school was a private school situated in an urban settlement, which is a school that is "established, conducted, and primarily supported by a non-governmental agency" (Boeskens, 2016:50). This private school consists of 30 learners in the classroom. The township schools are mostly for children from low-income families, whereas private and inner-city schools are mostly for children from affluent families (Milenkova & Peicheva, 2018). Different socio-economic backgrounds were selected to compare and identify factors influencing fear in a particular setting. To put it differently, three different schools from various socio-economic backgrounds took part in this study to explore and investigate whether the environment in which young children are exposed has a great influence on how they perceive and experience systemic factors that may cause fearfulness in them.

The following section provides a detailed deliberation of a public primary school in the township (Mamelodi), a former model C school in the eastern suburb of Pretoria and a private school in the urban area.

4.6.4   Township school

School A is a public school located in the township of the Gauteng province. The township school in which this study was conducted consisted of quite diverse learners in terms of languages, social, cultural, and economic features. Most of the learners in this school are from low socio-economic backgrounds living in the shacks in informal settlements. Although some learners in this school are from low- and middle socio-economic status families, the majority of learners in this township school come from a poor background, and their parents/caregivers are unemployed (Milenkova & Peicheva, 2018). Since learners from this school come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, they are exposed to limited access to medical services, making them more likely to skip school. Some parents/caregivers who have jobs work longer hours. In this regard, the majority of the learners in this school receive school nutrition. Numerous learners from this geographical area walk long distances to the school.

The school has good service delivery, including hygienic water and electricity and improved infrastructure, buildings, and playgrounds. However, the school has inadequate teaching and learning materials available. This public school was categorised as quintile four, meaning that learners pay a certain percentage for their registration fees in school. The public school was purposefully selected because it was located in the township area and closer to my residence. Therefore, it was convenient for me as a researcher in terms of time, costs, and access to the school (Maree, 2016).

4.6.5   Inner city school

School B is found in the Tshwane metropole (Pretoria) Central Business District (CBD), which is an inner-city neighbourhood comprising mainly apartments, in which most of the school's learners are residing. Most learners who enrolled in this school are from formerly disadvantaged communities. To these learners, which were primarily black African children, found themselves being exposed to diversity in terms of language, socio-economic status, and cultural beliefs. The children in this school come from a family background in which their parents/caregivers are employed as full-time workers and occupy their time making business for a living. In terms of the facilities, the school is well equipped with a wide-open sports area, improved libraries, and computer labs. The classrooms are well-furnished and contain adequate teaching and learning materials (Milenkova & Peicheva, 2018).

The school maintains English second language as their Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) from grade R to seven. Teachers in this school were employed permanently by the

DBE, and only a few teachers occupied temporary a vacancy for SGB posts. Furthermore, the school was categorised under quintile five, meaning all the learners pay the full amount of school fees.

4.6.6   Inner city school

School C is a private school situated in an urban area. Learners in private schools come from affluent backgrounds and have access to quality education and training, good healthcare, and other services such as clean water, electricity, and sanitation. In contrast to the township school, the urban school seems to be well-resourced and is managed effectively. Urban schools are considered to be one of the top schools in the country, with unlimited services such as sports play fields, libraries, computer labs, and well-furnished classrooms with teaching and learning materials such as overhead projectors, whiteboards, and other human resources. The participating school maintains a sole LOLT, English, in all the grades. The DBE permanently employs teachers in this school. Since this school is financially stable, some teachers are employed at full-time capacity by the School Governing Body (SGB) to reduce overloaded classrooms. Moreover, this school is ranked quintile five, implying that learners enrolled pay full of their fees. Learners enrolled in private schools come from affluent families, and both their parents were permanently employed.

4.7   DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The main data collection technique that was used in this research study includes the grade three learners' drawings and semi-structured interviews. As a researcher, I prompted the learners to draw a specific picture. This was done by reading a story to the learners while sitting on the carpet in the classroom. The aim of reading the story was to prompt the learners to draw things that influence fearful experiences in them. I discussed different situations, such as horror television movies, violence, and bullying, that could potentially induce fear in young children, followed by asking the learners to draw pictures of any situation that makes them fearful. Although all grade three learners participated in the study, I selected 12 grade three learners' drawings (four each) from all schools that depicted fear the best. Then, I asked each of the learners to explain their drawings, and I recorded what they said and wrote it down.

Furthermore, I also involved three teachers (one from each school) and 12 parents (four from each school) to participate in the interviews to collect rich and in-depth data about the experiences of fear in young children.

I observed the learners' body language and emotional expressions while drawing. I also walked around the classroom to observe the learner's physical behaviour and reactions while drawing their pictures. Moreover, aspects such as fearful reactions, pressing the pencil harder while drawing, and using specific colours while drawing were observed. Therefore, I used the observational checklist to guide me with the observations in the classroom.

Since I was the main instrument for data collection, I briefly discuss my role as a researcher in the following section.

4.7.1 The role of the researcher

The qualitative study requires a researcher to be a research instrument, actively involved throughout the research process to collect and interpret data (Niewenhuis, 2016). Since this was a qualitative research study, my role as a researcher included being a participant-observer, which entailed walking among the grade three learners while observing and interacting with them as they were drawing pictures of the things and circumstances that made them experience fearfulness (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I also used my knowledge and expertise of being a foundation phase teacher to assist me in the classroom setting to interact and handle the learners in an appropriate manner (Creswell, 2018). Being a participant-observer was an advantage for me, as I had the opportunity to engage in informal discussions with the grade three learners, asking them to explain what was happening in their pictures that made them fearful. In this regard, I collected rich and in-depth data for this research study (Maree, 2016).

Furthermore, my role as an interpretivist researcher was to attempt to access the participants' thoughts and lived experiences and the participants' subjective feelings about what eco-systemic factors influenced fearful experiences among young children. The participants in this study found the above-mentioned research question very sensitive as I asked them to share their personal experiences of the factors that made young children fearful. Therefore, my role as a researcher was primarily to explain the content of the consent letter and safeguard the participants and their information (Creswell, 2018). In the consent letters, I cautiously ensured that the participants remained anonymous and were protected throughout the study. For more details on the protection and anonymity of participants, please see section 4.8.

4.7.2   Data analysis

Fouche and Schurink (2011) suggest that qualitative study entails a researcher viewing the world through the participants' perspectives. Since the data contains the participants' voices and words, it was imperative for me as the researcher to analyse it accurately, using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a "flexible data analysis plan that qualitative researchers use to generate themes from interview data" (Clarke & Braun, 2013:120). This method of analysing data is flexible in that it does not require any particular research design related to thematic analysis, meaning it could be employed in narrative inquiry, case studies, and phenomenological study (Creswell, 2018). Through this flexibility, thematic analysis allowed the researcher to collect detailed, in-depth, and complex descriptions of the data.

Moreover, thematic analysis assisted me in focusing on examining themes that emerged within the data. This method of analysing data emphasises that the researcher should focus on organising and making a rich description of the data set, meaning that the analysing plan goes beyond the word count in a text and moves on to categorising implicit and explicit ideas within the data. In this study, I followed six phases of thematic analysis identified by Clarke and Braun (2013). In the initial phase, I familiarised myself with the written data. This phase required reading and re-reading the participants' responses about their perception of the causal factors of fear in young children, and I wrote down meaningful ideas. During the second phase, I coded the data using emerging themes (Metzler, 2014). In the third phase, I searched for patterns that assisted me in identifying emerging themes through the data.

After identifying initial themes, I progressed to phase four to review and identify themes again. This stage helped me confirm that I checked whether or not the themes identified through the third phase correspond to the codes identified in phase two to produce a flow chart of broad themes. After identifying the themes, I defined and named each theme during phase five. I accomplished the process by making a report of my findings and reviewing these findings.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of the trustworthiness of the study and ethical standards.

4.8   TRUSTWORTHINESS

Marshall and Rossman (2014:39) describe trustworthiness as the "goodness of qualitative research". On the other hand, Maree (2016:140) defines trustworthiness as "the way in which data is collected, sorted and classified, especially if it is verbal and textual". Marshall and

Rossman (2014) propose that trustworthiness involves four criteria that can be employed to evaluate the rigour of qualitative research. These four criteria include credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability.

4.8.1 Credibility

To address the credibility of qualitative studies, researchers should ensure that the study represents a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Cope, 2014). Credibility (internal validity) in this study was pursued through triangulation. Triangulation can be executed in various ways and by using numerous sources of information (Merriam, 2009). Although the aim of this study was to explore and identify factors that influence the fearful experiences among young children, the participants were not limited to young children as primary informants only but were extended to include the grade three teachers and parents/caregivers by virtue of having intimate knowledge of their children. The involvement of participants other than young children was done so that their experiences and perceptions on the phenomenon under scrutiny could be explored and captured and to ensure that information on the phenomenon of interest was derived from different sources. The involvement of various participant categories and different research sites, as well as using different methods of data collection, such as drawings and interviews, in this research study was to ensure that information was collected in numerous ways and from multiple sources.

Cope (2014) preserves that credibility in a qualitative study requires researchers to ensure that the study's results are credible and believable. Cope (2014) further explains that since qualitative research is concerned with exploring and investigating the perception, beliefs, opinions, subjective feelings, and lived experiences of the participants, the credibility of research findings can be best evaluated by the participants themselves as the sources of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). In this regard, I also considered involving the participants in this study to confirm or validate the findings that emerged.

4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability is achieved when readers feel as if the story of the research overlaps with their own situation, and they intuitively transfer the research to their own action (Maree, 2016). Creswell (2014) describes transferability as the extent to which the results in the study can be transferred across different people, time, and to another setting. Transferability ensures that the findings present may overlap for various people, times, and contexts (Creswell (2014).

In order to ensure the transferability of research findings to other contexts, the researcher should provide "thick descriptions" and extensive information about all aspects of the research process, ranging from the data collection to compiling the research report within a detailed contextual account of the study (Creswell, 2018). When the above-detailed descriptions of the research process are given, other researchers may be able to transfer the research findings to other contexts with other participants.

In this study, transferability was enhanced through the provision of contextual information involving the research process as a whole, detailed descriptions concerning the selection of participants and research sites, giving detailed background information of participants and research sites, data collection techniques, including instruments that were used and a comprehensive explanation of the data analysis process.

4.8.3   Dependability

According to Nieuwenhuis (2015), dependability in qualitative research is the substitute for reliability in a quantitative study. Maree (2016) describes dependability as an element to ensure that similar outcomes would be obtained if the research study were duplicated. Nieuwenhuis (2015) maintains that the dependability of findings could be improved by providing comprehensive reports of the research process to allow investigators to repeat the study in future research. The full reports give future researchers a detailed understanding of the research methodology employed in the study, thus allowing them to replicate the findings (Rule & John, 2011). An audit trail and coding-recoding process could be used to ensure the dependability of research findings. Both these strategies were incorporated into this study.

4.8.4   Confirmability

Maree (2016) defines confirmability as the extent to which others can confirm the findings of a study. Babbie and Mouton (2012:149) describe confirmability as the "extent to which the findings of a study are the product of a focus of the topic of the study and are not based on biasness" of the researcher. In this study, confirmability was done by documenting the data analysis process and reflecting on the procedures throughout the study. I intended to guard against my own personal insight and prejudice throughout the course of the study (Creswell, 2014). I enhanced confirmability through data audit, in which I looked at the procedures of collecting and analysing data to assess some likeness of bias that maybe have occurred (Rule & John, 2011). To ensure confirmability, I made an audit trail and kept my journal that contained the personal biases of the researcher and personal reflections in relation to the

phenomenon under scrutiny and all activities that took place in the field. The following are a few strategies to ensure confirmability:

- Identifying and describing negative instances that are inconsistent with observations made earlier on during the data collection process (Maree, 2016).
- An audit trail which, according to Rule and John (2011:107), "allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and procedures described"; and
- Keeping a reflexive journal in which, the researcher documents all events that took place in the field, the researcher's personal reflections relating to the study, particularly the phenomenon under scrutiny (Creswell, 2018).

Table 4-6 on the next page presents a summary of the criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of research findings, adapted from Maree (2016); Creswell (2018).

Table 0-6: Applicability of the trustworthiness criteria in this research study

Criteria	Strategy	Applicability
Credibility	Triangulation	The researcher employed different triangulation strategies: - Various data collection strategies, such as drawings and individual interviews - Various sources of information were obtained from different participants
Transferability	Thick descriptions	Providing full descriptions of the context of the research process as well as background information on participants and research sites
Dependability	Audit trail	An audit trail

Criteria	Strategy	Applicability
		• Providing a detailed explanation of the research process/ methodology
	Code-recoding	Coding-recoding of data to refine themes that emerged from the collected data
Confirmability	Audit trail	Audit trail as indicated above
	Reflexivity	Keeping a reflexive journal documenting the researcher's personal biases, personal reflections relating to the phenomenon under scrutiny and events that occurred in the field

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) acknowledge that ethical aspects are crucial to avoid harmful measures to participants. Ethical guidelines were applied in this study by, first of all abiding by the University of Pretoria's ethical code of conduct and procedures. As a researcher, I have obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's ethical committee to assist me to bound and observing the ethical principles thereof. The Gauteng education department granted me the permission to continue my studies. Assent letters were provided to the children, and letters of informed consent to the parents to inform them about the research procedures and to request permission for their participation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). I also asked parents/caregivers of grade three learners to indicate on the consent form if they were interested in participating in my study.

This study was conducted in three different primary schools. All the principals of the three selected schools were requested permission to carry out my study. Verbal and written consent was requested from parents/caregivers of the grade three learners to permit them to participate in the study.

Likewise, participants were informed regarding the process and purpose of the study, and informed assent was obtained. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were

permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. I did not offer any inducements to grade three learners who were taking part in this study. Participants were guaranteed safety, anonymity, privacy, and protection of their identities, thus using pseudonyms.

4.10 SUMMARY

This chapter explored the research methodology and the design appropriate for the study. Using a qualitative approach, the relevance of choosing an interpretivist paradigm was explained. Furthermore, a discussion of the sampling methods and data collection instruments was delivered. In the last section of this chapter, I discussed the strategies that were useful in ensuring this study's trustworthiness and ethical aspects. The next chapter presents a detailed exposition of the data analysis process.

CHAPTER 5
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I presented the research methodology that was used to collect data from the three participating schools comprising 12 grade three learners' drawings and interviews from the 12 parents and three educators. In this chapter, I deliver a discussion of the analysis and the interpretation of the data. The interviews and journal notes support the findings obtained from the grade three learners' drawings and confirm the themes and sub-themes. The coding describes the strategies that I used, including sorting and categorising all the data sets so that this process would be scientifically and trustworthily presented. This chapter deliberates on the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data sets. The study's purpose was to investigate, through grade three learners' drawings and interviews, what eco-systemic factors influence fearful experiences among young children.

5.2   RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS: THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

In the following section, I present the themes and sub-themes that transpired from the 12 grade three learners' drawings, their 12 parents, and three educators. The themes that came to light seemed to be the most significant regarding the factors influencing fearful experiences among young children.

Four main themes came to the fore from the data set analysis, as shown in table 5-1 on the next page. Thereafter, I identified the sub-themes from the main themes. The main themes that emerged were:

- Children's perceptions of fearful experiences
- Children's solutions to fearful experiences
- Parents' voices regarding fear among young children
- Teachers' strategies for handling fearfulness in learners.

As indicated below, 14 sub-themes were most prominent in the grade three learners' drawings and interview data (see table 5-1).

While identifying the main themes, I read and re-read the transcriptions and coded key phrases. In other words, I read over the transcribed notes twice and searched for repeated

patterns. Table 5-1 on the next page displays a list of main themes and sub-themes as they materialised. The sub-themes provided insight and the importance and relevance of each theme in answering the question: How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children?

Table 0-1: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Children's perceptions of fearful experiences	Microsystem Mesosystem Exosystem Macrosystem Chronosytem
Children's solutions to fearful experiences	Low socio-economic background Middle socio-economic status High socio-economic status
Parents' voices regarding fear among young children	Low socio-economic background Middle socio-economic status High socio-economic status
Teachers' strategies for handling fearfulness in learners	Low socio-economic background Middle socio-economic status High socio-economic status

Table 0-2: List of Grade 3 learners and their drawings

Name	Age	Gender	Socio-economic status	Learner codes
1. Dorah	9	Girl	Low	L1G9L
2. Morapedi	8	Girl	Low	L2G8L
3. Sele	9	Girl	Low	L3G9L
4. Themba	9	Boy	Low	L4B9L
5. Unice	9	Girl	Middle	L5G9M
6. Oarabilwe	8	Girl	Middle	L6G8M
7. Matshwene	9	Boy	Middle	L7B9M
8. Bohlale	8	Boy	Middle	L8B8M
9. Tumishang	9	Girl	High	L9G9H
10. Taylor	9	Girl	High	L10G9H
11. Bongani	8	Boy	High	L11B8H
12. Oratilwe	9	Girl	High	L12G9H

Please note that pseudonyms are used in Table 5-2.

In the subsequent section, I discuss the themes and sub-themes that came to the fore from the data set of low, middle, and high socio-economic status.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Children's perceptions of fearful experiences

This theme focuses on young children's understanding of fear from various levels. This section presents the causes of fear in young children from the micro, meso, exo, macro, and chronosystem. The section begins with the analysis of young children living in a low socio-economic background, followed by middle socio-economic status children and children from high socio-economic status.

CHILDREN LIVING IN LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Picture 5-1 below illustrates the features of the drawings from children living in high socio-economic status

Scared child left alone at home   Scared of parents fighting
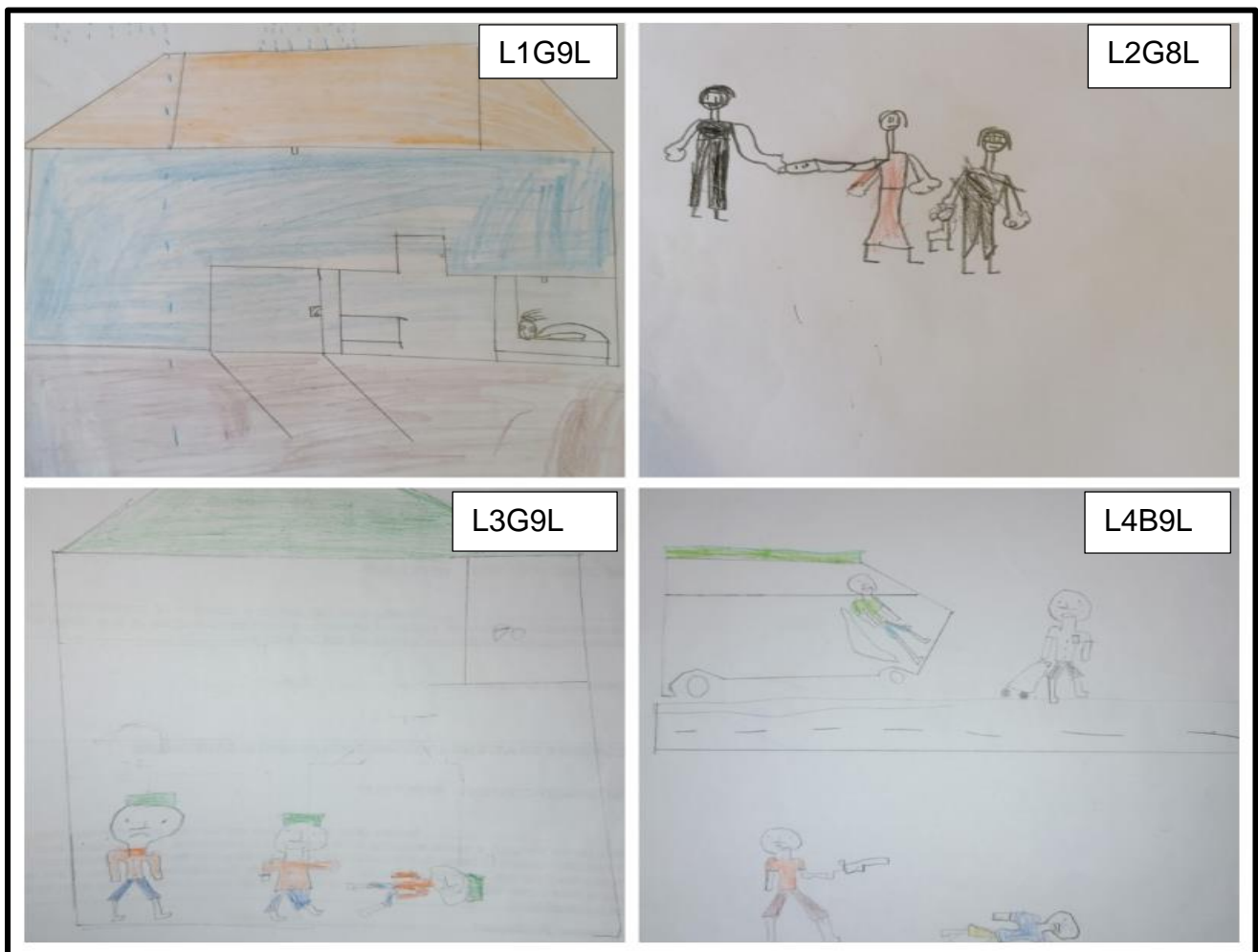
Scared of bullying   Scared of shooting and murder

Picture 0-1: Drawings from children living in low socio-economic status

5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Microsystem

In the drawings and interviews of the grade three learners living in a low socio-economic background, they spoke mainly about the home environment as a factor that caused fear in their lives. The evidence validating the themes through sub-themes was from drawings and interviews with the children, teachers' and parents' interviews, and my journal notes. It was evident from my interpretation of the grade three drawings that the children with the low socio-economic background did not have a close relationship and quality time with their parents/caregivers. It was illustrated in the drawings and children's utterances that they had limited love, warmth, and support from their parents/caregivers. The grade three learners' drawings showed evidence of a lack of affection and parental care as well as protection for children.

5.2.1.1.1 Neglectful parenting style

According to Cherry (2016), uninvolved parents provide little warmth, emotional support, and limited communication with their children. Uninvolved parents also make few demands and are relatively detached from what is happening in the child's life. Therefore, they show some negligence. It was evident from the parents' responses that they do not spend quality time with their children. The responses from P1 were evident in this regard. P1 stated:

I don't spend too much time with them during the day. I leave the house early in the morning, and we come back late at night. Sometimes, we find them sleeping. I don't really get the opportunity to see what is happening during the day. She is used to that life…she knows that I'm often not around at home.

The data of P1 confirm that the parents living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods provide limited warmth and care to their children. They compromise their parental responsibilities and consequently neglect the emotional needs of their children due to their need for employment and the distance they travel to get to their places of employment.

L1G9L drew herself into a small corner, demonstrating her insecurities. She drew herself alone in the house with closed doors and no windows. Drawing a house with closed doors and no windows indicate limited openness and communication with parents and other people. This indicates that L1G9L has little interaction with her parents, which can derail the development of children and subsequently cause fear and insecurities in her. In this regard, she commented:

I feel scared when I am left alone in the house. My mom is not always at home. I don't have anyone to talk to.

Young children need love, care, and support to feel secure. Aleksiejuk (2016) warn that young children may feel less protected and insecure if the home environment does not provide care and warmth.

It is clear from the drawing of L1G9L that her family provides inadequate love and support, exposing her to high levels of fear. As indicated by Lunkenheimer et al. (2017), parents from low socio-economic status are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety due to financial constraints. As a result, they display unresponsiveness, insecure attachment, and low warmth towards their children, thereby influencing avoidant attachment in young children, which means that children experience fearfulness and insecurities. Popov and Ilesanmi (2015) reckon parents from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to leave their children unsupervised. This was confirmed by P3 when she commented:

She has many friends, you know. They play well together, and I don't like bothering her when she is playing. I don't always know where and who she is playing with.

The researcher believes that L1G9L and L3G9L were neglected by their parents and had limited communication. Young children who are left alone lack parental care and protection, so they often feel fearful and insecure. The home environment of children from low socio-economic backgrounds appears to be strongly unstable.

5.2.1.1.2 Child-headed household

It is common for minors in South African society to care for other siblings and manage the household (Pillay, 2016). During the interview, P1 responded:

She is old; she can stay in the house with her two siblings. She can feed the youngest sibling. She is used to that life. She knows that I'm often not around at home. She knows how to take care of her siblings.

Le Roux-Kemp (2013) indicates that parents with a low socio-economic background work longer hours, compromising their parental responsibilities. This is supported by Pillay (2016), who agrees that parents from disadvantaged communities experience difficulties in managing parental responsibilities. Thus, children take over the responsibilities and role of parents, which exposes them to child-headed households. When siblings take over the child-headed

roles and responsibilities, they spend long hours on their own with limited parental care and protection. As a result, they are more likely to experience fear and insecurities, as the home is insecure.

5.2.1.1.3 Domestic violence

L2G8L drew her parents fighting. She used black in the drawing of herself and father, which indicates hopelessness and unpleasant and negative feelings (Burkitt, Barrett & Davis, 2003). She used a red colour on her mother's drawing, which is an indication of danger and blood. During the interviews, L2G8L commented:

I am scared when I see my mother and father fighting.

L2G8L drew herself towards the end of the family, which depicts a lack of protection, warmth, and attachment from her parents. However, her mother appears to be the biggest person in the drawing, which could mean she is close to her mother (Jolley,2009). L2G8L seems scared of her father, as she did not draw herself closer to her father. She drew the exaggerated arms of her father, which demonstrate the action of violence over her mother. She felt unprotected at home as she was witnessing violence. Her family influenced more negative feelings and little love, support, and warmth. The facial expression of L2G8L and her parents were all sad, which means she did not have loving moments shared with her family that could have assisted her in developing positive well-being. During the interview, P2 responded:

She sees us when we fight. Yes, there is too much conflict at home. There is too much shouting between us.

Jenney and Alaggia (2018) postulate that the non-abusing parent spends a significant amount of time striving to survive the violence to the extent that they cannot provide quality parenting to the children. In other words, the violence in the home influences the non- abusing parent to reduce parental warmth and care towards the children (Stanley, 2011). In this way, the victim parent is more likely to have trouble protecting and providing emotional support and encouragement to the young child, which leads to the experience of fear and insecurities in young children.

Unfortunately, these children from low socio-economic statuses are exposed to family disruptions and instabilities. This highlighted that the parenting and home environment are very unstable - which is seen as critical during this stage of a child's development (Pastorelli, Lansford, Luengo Kanacri, Malone, Di Giunta, Bacchini & Sorbring, 2016). In this regard, the

children were deprived of the positive parent-child relationship, which greatly affected their feelings of safety in the family. These violent experiences also contributed to young children's view of the home as unsafe, consequently causing fear.

From this perspective, it can be concluded that the home environment plays a significant role in causing fear in young children with low socio-economic status.

5.2.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Mesosystem

L3G9L drew the learners bullying each other in the classroom. She drew the victim learner on the floor, which shows the bully pushed him. The picture she drew depicts three boys; two of them are very angry, showing clear frowns and down-turned mouths. The facial expression of the victim learner shows a clear picture of the upturned corner of the mouth and unhappy eyes; this drawing seems to be the angriest figure. The other boy in the background seems to not like friends that are bullying each other. He seems to be unpleasant with what is happening, and he is at a distance; he may walk away.

Conversely, the bully shows a happy face and smile that he defeated the victim/weak learner. The bully appears to be physically stronger than the victim learner. Hence there is no sign of fighting back. It may be that the bully took advantage of the victim learner, who appeared to be physically weak and less likely to defend himself or retaliate when confronted by a bully. Govender (2013) agree that physically and emotionally weak children are more likely to become bullying victims. The bullying occurred in the classroom in the absence of the teacher. L3G9L responded that:

I feel scared when I see other children fighting in the classroom.

From my understanding of the children's drawings, it is evident that L3G9L was scared when she witnessed the bullying, as she drew all the pictures at the bottom edge of the paper. Jolley (2009) states that when the drawing is positioned at the edge of the paper, it is an indication of the child's fear and insecurities.

Moreover, during my research, it was evident that when children lack a sense of safety and security, they lose concentration and confidence to learn and explore. Emotionally, the children were uncomfortable as the teacher was angry and trying to get their attention. I also noticed the children's facial expressions and lack of participation as evidence that they were scared of the teacher's reaction. During the interviews with T1, she remarked that:

They look afraid when I speak or read to them in a loud voice. They lose attention and become easily distracted.

The teacher demonstrated negative emotions and was unsupportive, which motivated the children to be uncomfortable and lose attention in the classroom. The teacher showing low levels of warmth and high levels of negative emotions and conflict may cause fear in children. The teacher did not create a safe learning environment for the children; therefore, the learners demonstrated a lack of interest in participating in the learning activities. I noted that the teachers from a low socio-economic background were not sensitive towards other learners in the classroom.

Furthermore, the school plays a huge role in causing fear of learners, when trying to involve the parents in their children's education. This was evident from the responses of T1, who said:

Sending them home to give a message to parents who are not cooperative. The parents mostly respond with aggression.

There is a lack of parental engagement in the school. The parents show a lack of interest in the activities that are happening in school. This may be due to a lack of trust between the parents and the school. Hence parents are not cooperating with the school. There is no good relationship between the parents and the school, and parents have lost hope in the services that the school can provide. The parents living in a low socio-economic background are helpless and do not trust the school to assist. From this perspective, it is clear that there is no collaboration between the school and the parents. Therefore, the children are trapped in the middle. The child may experience fear because of the negative relationship between the teacher and their parents. From this perspective, it can be concluded that schools contribute to the experience of fear in young children.

5.2.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Exosystem

5.2.1.3.1 Poverty

L1G9L drew herself into a two-bedroom house that seemed to lack furniture. She also drew clouds with drops of rain. The house contained no windows, and it seemed to be poorly maintained because it looked like the roof was leaking. L1G9L drew raindrops that passed through the roof and filled up the whole house. She used the blue crayon to colour the inside of the house, which is a clear indication that the small house is flooded with water inside.

From L1G9L drawing, it is evident that the children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods live in small shacks that are made of weak materials. The shacks are often unstable to protect them against heavy rains. People are forced to live in informal settlements because of poverty and unemployment and because residents cannot afford to build or buy their own stable houses. In this regard, T1 indicated that unemployment and poverty are some of the problems that exist in the community.

Ralli et al. (2020) argues that poverty and lack of finance present parents with distress, anxiety, and depression, making it difficult for them to show love, care, and warmth and respond to their children's needs. This is supported by Lunkenheimer et al. (2017) when maintaining that parents from low socio-economic status are more likely to display unresponsiveness, insecure attachment, and low warmth towards their children, thereby influencing avoidant attachment in young children, which means that children experience feelings of fearfulness and insecurities. The researcher believes that economically disadvantaged parents are more likely to reduce parental sensitivity and interactions with their children. They display a lack of involvement and affection towards their children, consequently showing negative reactions that may cause fear and insecurities.

In the same vein, L2G8L drew her parents fighting. From the drawing, it looks like the father of L2G8L was stabbing the mother with a knife. L2G8L used the red colour to indicate the blood on her mother. According to Conger et al. (2010), financial struggle exposes parents to emotional distress that may result in inter-parental conflict and violence, including emotional abuse, control, and physical violence. As supported by Zhou (2018), stress resulting from a lack of finances, job loss, or other family problems can increase the level of conflict and violence in the home. In other words, financial instability exposes parents to distress and may lead to conflict and violence between parents and consequently exposing young children to experience more stress and violence (Ralli et al., 2020). In this regard, T1

indicated that gender-based violence is one of the problems that exist in the community. The researcher believes that financial hardship may increase conflict and violence between parents. In so doing, inter-parental conflict and violence may cause parents to experience depression and emotional distress that makes it difficult for them to provide adequate love, warmth, and support to their children, thereby causing high levels of fear in them.

5.2.1.3.2 Parents working longer hours

The parents living in low socio-economic neighbourhoods often work longer hours. During the interview, P1 commented:

I leave the house early in the morning, and we come back late at night to assist my husband to sell the vegetables, because that is our only source of income.

Clearly, parents from disadvantaged backgrounds strive to make income to provide food for their children. They also did not have time or opportunity to talk about their own feelings with their children. These parents spend long hours at work to try to provide food and other materials. Thus, they did not consider the importance of their children's safety and responding to their emotional needs. Chappel, Suldo and Ogg (2014) indicated that factors such as economic stress within the family context might lead to lower maternal availability and warmth and support, which may cause increased fear in young children. The reduced amount of time in parental contact and care, and support can also cause fearfulness and low self-esteem in young children (Kang, 2019). Fagan (2013) reckons that when parents work longer hours, children are left on their own and often deprived of the positive parent-child relationship, which may leave children with insecurities. The researcher believes that L1G9L was neglected due to parental work responsibilities; as a result, she experienced high levels of fear and insecurity.

5.2.1.3.3 Community violence

L4B9L drew himself witnessing a gunshot. According to him, he was going to school in the morning and saw a person killed by a gunshot. He drew his mouth wide open, which indicates that he was screaming when he saw the incident. He also drew drops of tears on his face, which demonstrates sadness and crying. The driver's facial expression shows the upturned corner of their mouth, which means they are unhappy and angry about what was happening. The picture of a driver indicates that he stood up in the car to view the full details of the incident. It could be that the driver knows the person lying down or wants to assist. The thief

has a smile on his face, which indicate happiness and victory. The picture of the thief shows an extended arm, meaning he successfully shot the victim (Jolley, 2009). L4B9L drew a small human figure to represent himself, which could imply he experienced negative feelings (Burkitt et al., 2003). His hands were very small, which meant he was helpless and could not assist the victim. He used the red colour to indicate violence and blood from the victim.

Furthermore, the child only started drawing from the centre of the page to the lower edge of the page, which is an indication of insecurities. From this perspective, it can be said that children from low socio-economic backgrounds often witness community violence that causes fear in them. This was confirmed by T1, who stated:

They are violent to children and to each other, and they use foul language.

Jackson, Posick and Vaughn (2019) concede that young children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods witness stubbing, physical and sexual assault, and shooting that interfere with their social development and causes fearfulness in them. The researcher believes that young children who are exposed to violence may view the environment as the most dangerous place to live in.

From this perspective, the low socio-economic neighbourhoods expose young children to stress and high levels of fear.

5.2.1.4   Sub-theme 4: Macrosystem

L3G9L drew children bullying each other in the classroom. Marais (2016) argues that overcrowded classrooms increase bullying in schools. This is supported by Saldiraner and Gizir (2021), who indicate that schools located in low socio-economic status are overcrowded, and it becomes difficult for the teacher to maintain discipline in the classroom. In this regard, bullies can victimise other children because of the increased number of learners in the classroom. It may be that the classroom teacher had reported the overcrowding to the principal, and the principal is hesitant to escalate the matter because the DBE does not deliver mobile classrooms/services in time to the schools located in low socio-economic status. In this way, the DBE is indirectly causing fear in children because the school is not a safe learning environment. Saldiraner and Gizir (2021) further state that the curriculum is inaccurate because it prioritises the learners' academic performance rather than character and moral education. Saldiraner and Gizir (2021) emphasise that teaching values

and morals have become less important in schools, and priority is given to academic performance in the education system.

Furthermore, the lack of physical and social resources, such as cultural activities and sports in low socio-economic schools, encourages bullying behaviours. Learners that spend adequate time in social and physical activities display decreased bullying behaviours (Bishnoi, 2018). In this regard, the macrosystem is indirectly causing fear in learners by not providing physical and social facilities in schools and the inflexible curriculum that prioritises academic performance.

5.2.1.5   Sub-theme 5: Chronosystem

During the interview, L1G9L indicated that she was scared of rain and thunder. She drew herself in a one-sleeping bedroom house that contained less furniture. The house looked like a shack. She mentioned that she was living in an informal settlement with both parents. According to Gullone (2000), it is normal for young children aged eight to nine to fear heavy rain accompanied by storm-like conditions (heavy winds, thunder, and lightning). Fear of rain may be due to the fact that when the rain starts, storm-like conditions also happen, and it gets dark as thundering clouds gather overhead, hindering the sunlight. Children from low socio-economic backgrounds often witness heavy rain accompanied by lightning, thunder, and floods, which cause harm to life and property through landslides, building collapses, and power failures. Evans et al. (2012) acknowledge that prolonged and persistent exposure to negative experiences can cause fear in young children, which may lead to tiredness, loss of appetite, chronic pain, headache, stomachache, and diarrhoea.

L1G9L also mentioned that she was scared of being home alone. It may be that young children aged eight-to-nine years are still learning to trust the environment and to cope without their parents/caregivers. Staying at home alone could be scary for L1G9L, as Piaget (1962) acknowledges that eight-to-nine-year-old children still have imaginary thinking that may cause fear. In this way, the age of L1G9L causes her much more fear because her imaginary thinking skills dominate her cognitive skills. Exposure to prolonged and consistent fear in young children can lead to somatic symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, chest pains, and nausea (Moller, 2017).

During the interviews, L4B9L commented that he was scared of the gun. Gullone (2000) studied the development of normal fears in young children. Gullone (2000) indicates that it is normal for a nine-year-old child to fear weapons and guns. Boyer and Bergstrom (2011)

acknowledge that nine-year-old children are scared of real and concrete objects. On the other hand, Burnside, and Gaylord-Harden (2019) acknowledge that it is common for children with low socio-economic status to witness community violence, consequently leaving young children with a detrimental experience that contributes to the cause of insecurities and fear. For such children, the environment could be perceived as the most unsafe place to be. Instead of thinking about friendships, they continuously experience fearful feelings that disturb the healthy development of their childhood. When young children are persistently exposed to hardships such as neglect, abuse, poverty, and violence, which in turn exposes them to what Hartinger-Saunders et al. (2012) named "chronic fears", they may experience somatic symptoms such as headaches, dizziness, chest pains, and nausea.

CHILDREN LIVING IN MIDDLE SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS

Picture 5-2 below illustrates the features of the drawings from children living in high socio-economic status.

Scared child left alone at home   Scared of parents fighting and bullying
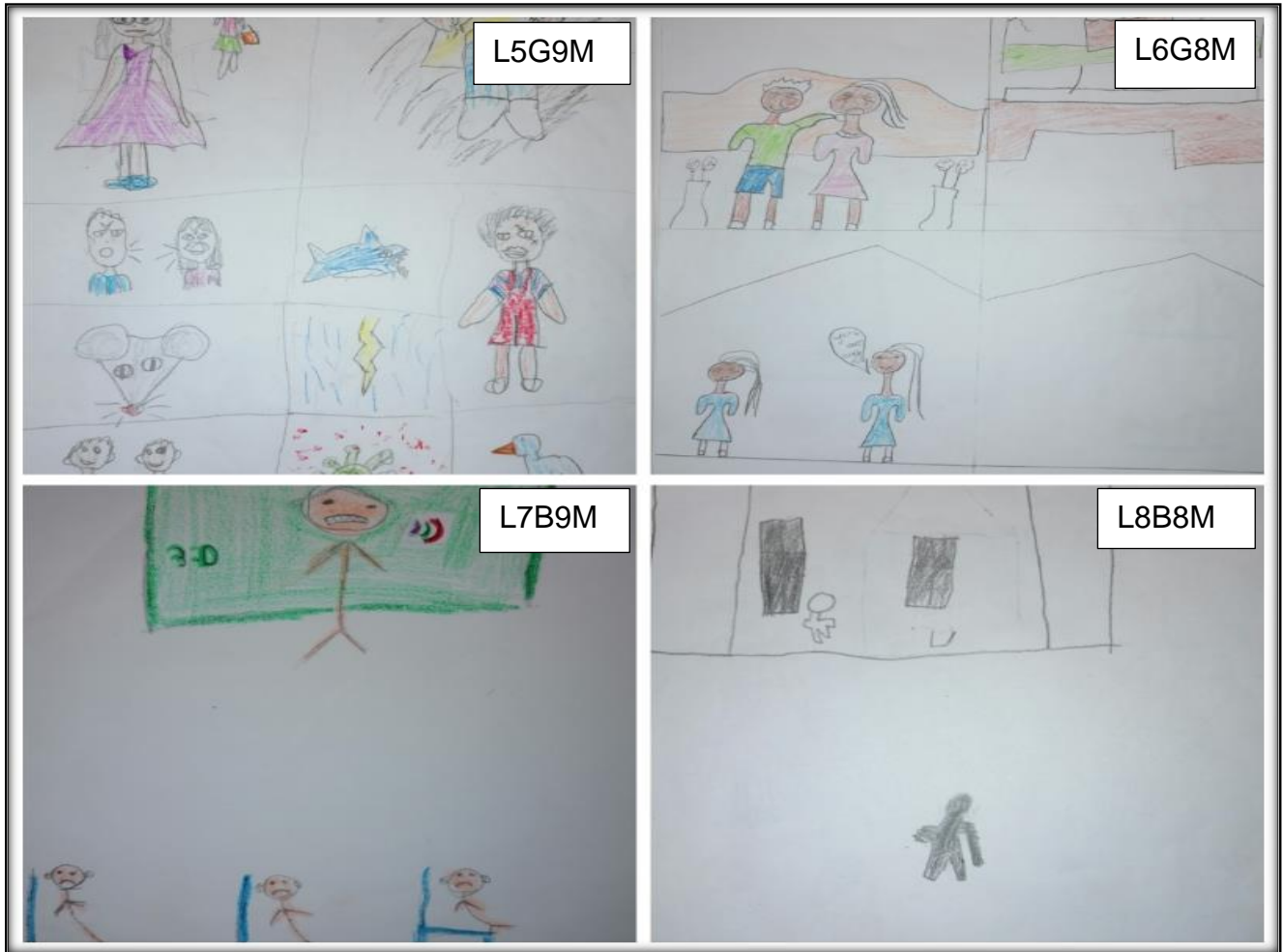
Scared of the teacher shouting   Scared of the black shadow

Picture 0-2: Drawings from children living in the middle socio-economic status

5.2.1.6   Sub-theme 1: Microsystem

L5G9M drew her mother carrying the handbag and walking towards the opened door, which could mean that she was leaving the child alone in the house. She drew herself with squint eyes and a sad face, which could possibly mean that she was scared. In the drawing, she appears to be standing still with her arms kept tied to herself, which could mean that she lacks love, comfort, and warmth from her mother. The picture of her legs stood still and very close to each other, which could mean that she was freezing. She may look freezing because she is scared when her mother leaves her alone.

In the second drawing, she drew herself in the darkness with a black colour, which could possibly mean that she was scared of the darkness. It could be possible that when her mother left her alone, she came back late in the evening, and she was sitting in the darkness. It could

be possible that L5G9M was told to sit in the house and watch television. Thus, it looks like she watched horror movies because of the absence of her parents. The loneliness and watching horror movies cause fear in her.

L5G9M responded:

I feel scared when it is quiet, and I am left alone at home. I feel scared of the dark and when I am watching horror movies.

Television is becoming the most popular source of media, which is more often watched than other media, such as reading the newspaper and listening to radio news (Lemish, 2015). Hoge et al. (2017) maintain that television displays horror movies, violent events and images involving killing, personal harm, and injuries to individuals that induce fear in young children. The amount of time young children spends watching horror movies is so influential that it shapes their minds, views, perspectives, and emotions about the environment (Genner & Süss, 2017). Fitzpatrick et al. (2016) also highlight the view that when young children are exposed to violent acts and images on a television programme, it may negatively affect their emotional development. Cantor (2013) agrees with Fitzpatrick et al. (2016) and maintains that young children can produce very clear, powerful, and detailed images and descriptions of horror movies they saw on television in their minds and believe that it might happen to them. Thus, they experience feelings of fear. Researchers such as Melki et al. (2016) confirmed that exposure to violent media among young children might cause high level of fearfulness.

5.2.1.6.1   Domestic violence

L5G9M and L6G8M drew their parents with wide-open mouths, which could mean that they were shouting at each other. The facial expression of both parents shows clear frown eyebrows with big eyes, which depicts the angriest faces in the picture. The mother of L5G9M and L6G8M were drawn with short arms. The drawing of short arms could imply that the mother was helpless and non-aggressive (Jolley, 2009). During the interview, L5G9M responded: *'I feel scared when I see my parents fighting.'* From this perspective, it is evident that the home environment of L5G9M and L6G8M was unstable and can cause insecurities in them. These two children seemed to receive little love and warmth from her parents. L5G9M and L6G8M did not share loving moments with their parents as they spent time shouting and fighting with each other. L6G8M never commented on her mother providing her comfort while feeling scared. As indicated by Jenney and Alaggia (2018), the victim's parents spend a significant amount of time striving to survive violence to the extent that they cannot provide quality parenting to the children. In so doing, the non-abusing parent displays a decrease in parental warmth and caring towards the children, which ultimately causes fear.

5.2.1.6.2   Divorce

Gaydosh (2015) states that when one partner withdraws from the marriage, young children are often confronted with decreased daily contact with one parent and consequently lose parent-child attachment. The absence of one parent is often related to immediate or long-term consequences on the child's well-being (Gaydosh, 2015). Kang and Cohen (2017) propose that children in single-parent households are more likely to be deprived of parental love, warmth, and support as compared to parents who are married. The decline in parental love, care, and support may also increase feelings of low self-esteem and insecurities in young children.

During the interview, P5 responded: *'I am divorced.'* Roth et al. (2014) point out that divorced parents experience high levels of stress and depression that lead to low warmth, unresponsiveness, and negative reactions towards their children. L5G9M never commented anything about her parents comforting her while feeling scared. The researcher believes that divorcing parents are more likely to provide limited care and support and less time for interaction with their children, which increases the experience of fear in young children. The comment of P5 supports this:

She is okay when I leave her alone, nothing really makes her scared.

As indicated by Sorek (2019), divorcing parents are often not attentive and sensitive towards the emotional needs of their children.

5.2.1.7   Sub-theme 2: Mesosystem

This sub-theme focuses on the various factors from the school that causes fear in young children. Included in this sub-theme are bullying and the teacher-learner relationship.

5.2.1.7.1   Bullying

L6G8M drew herself with her friend. The facial expression of L6G8M is sad, with closed eyes and an upturned mouth. It looks like the friend is emotionally bullying L6G8M as her speech bubble reads, *'you are ugly.'* It could be possible that L6G8M is experiencing emotional bullying at school. It could be possible that the bully took advantage of L6G8M as she appeared physically small and weaker. The physical appearance of L6G8M made her a target of bullying. Emotional bullying can negatively affect her self-confidence and cause insecurities. Her friend is looking happy with her mouth smiling. It seems that she enjoys bullying and hurting L6G8M.

5.2.1.7.2   Teacher-learner relationship

On the other hand, L7B9M drew the teacher shouting loud at the learners in the classroom. The teacher's facial expression shows a clear picture of clenched teeth with unhappy eyes, which depicts the rude and angry figure. The children in the classroom are looking at the teacher with unhappy faces. The drawing of the children shows big ears, which could imply that they are listening very carefully to the teacher's voice. The facial expression of all the children in the drawing shows a clear picture of the upturned mouth with sad feelings, which could mean that the teacher is making negative comments that hurt them. It is more likely that the children may develop negative relationships with the teacher, lacking warmth, support, and communication. In so doing, the teacher clearly depicts her limited patience, sensitiveness, and kindness, which could make the children uncomfortable interacting with her. The classroom is not a safe learning environment for the children, as they seem to be emotionally hurt. It could be possible that the teacher stopped teaching as she turned her back from the chalkboard. It can be said that teaching and learning in the classroom are interrupted when the teacher is angry. The children in this drawing are less likely to learn effectively, as the learning environment is unsafe and unconducive. A teacher who cannot

create a positive learning classroom over a sustained period may reduce the self-esteem of the learners and influence high levels of fear in them.

In this regard, the teacher plays a huge role in causing fear in young children. White (2016) agrees that a teacher who lacks warmth and support is less likely to form a close relationship with young children and is more likely to cause fear in young children. This is because children feel comfortable interacting with kind and patient teachers in a safe classroom environment. The teacher in the middle socio-economic status school seems to cause fear in children.

5.2.1.8   Sub-theme 3: Exosystem

This sub-theme focuses on the various factors from the community that causes fear in young children. Included in this sub-theme are animals, diseases, extended families, and poverty.

5.2.1.8.1   Scared of animals

From the grade three learners' drawings, it was evident that the children living in the middle-income class are scared of the animals like sharks, birds, bees, and mice. It is possible that L5G9M had been bitten by a bee or saw a shark on television eating people. It could be that L5G9M had never been on an outdoor field trip to see a real shark. It maybe that the parents shared their fears about the animals, or they witnessed their parents at home being afraid of such animals. During the interview, L5G9M responded:

I feel scared of the mouse, I scream. I feel scared of the bird. I don't know why. I feel scared of the shark. I am also scared of a bee.

5.2.1.8.2   Disease

In her drawing L5G9M drew a picture of the coronavirus. When interviewed, she responded: *'I am scared of the coronavirus because it kills many people.'* It may be because the study took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the interviews with the teacher, she commented:

COVID-19 has affected our community. People are scared of catching the virus. It completely affects them. They are scared of getting sick and dying. Seeing all the screening tools, thermometers etc. fills them with fear.

It is evident that COVID-19 is causing fear in young children. The children were indirectly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as some witnessed their parents dealing with more

serious symptoms of COVID-19 during the hard lockdown (Duan, Shao, Wang, Huang, Miao, Yang & Zhu, 2020). The ability of the parents to manage and cope with their stressful situations is very important for their well-being and for the well-being of their children. This is supported by the study conducted by Spinelli, Lionetti, Pastore and Fasolo (2020). Spinelli et al. (2020) found that parents, who were faced with problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic, experienced a greater amount of stress, which they expressed verbally through negative interaction with their children, leading to high levels of fear in children. In this way, it is significant for parents to communicate with their children to reduce fearfulness, as young children may have been exposed to a huge amount of negative information concerning the pandemic through the media and internet.

5.2.1.8.3   Poverty

During the interview with the T1, she commented that the COVID-19 pandemic caused people to lose their jobs and face financial instability. Zhou (2018) agrees that parents may experience great stress due to job loss and financial issues. Conger et al. (2010) reckon that financial struggles may cause parents to experience emotional distress that can result in inter-parental conflict and violence. In other words, financial instability exposes parents to distress and may lead to conflict and violence between parents. Consequently, exposing young children to experience more stress and violence (Ralli et al., 2020).

Furthermore, Capaldi et al. (2012) agree and maintain that parental exposure to unemployment and lack of finances may result in a lack of satisfaction in the relationship and, ultimately, one partner pulling out of the relationship. This may consequently damage the inter-parental relationship. During the interviews with P5, she commented:

I had general conflicts and disagreements. I divorced because the husband was abusive and not financially responsible.

The researcher agrees that financial hardships may result in a lack of satisfaction and violence in a relationship and, ultimately, one partner pulling out of the relationship.

Although young children are not directly affected by the financial implications in the family, Ralli et al. (2020) warn that when parents are experiencing limited access to financial resources, they often find themselves faced with anxiety, depression, and stress that make it difficult for them to show love, care, warmth and respond to their children's needs. This was evident from the data as P5 commented: '*Nothing really scares her. I don't really know.*'

The researcher also believes that the P5 did not have quality time with her child. It looks like P5 spent too much time in conflict and fighting with her husband to the extent that she did not have parent-child interaction and warmth towards her. The researcher believes that P5 did not openly communicate with her child L5G9M. As argued by Popov and Ilesanmi (2015:253), "distressed parents have been found to be less involved with and affectionate towards their children, exhibit poor communication skills, and negative emotional reactions". I agree that parents experiencing financial hardships become distressed and more likely to display unresponsiveness, insecure attachment, and low warmth towards their children, thereby influencing avoidant attachment in young children. This means that children experience feelings of fearfulness and insecurities.

5.2.1.9   Sub-theme 4: Macrosystem

5.2.1.9.1   Lack of psychosocial support

L5G9M and L6G8M) drew themselves experiencing bullying at school. On the other hand, L7B9M drew himself and other classmates experiencing emotional abuse by the teacher. The DBE is indirectly causing increased fear by not offering services to the learners who the teachers and bullies victimise in school (Govender, 2013). The integrated school health policy aims to address the immediate learners' health problems (including those that constitute barriers to learning) and implement interventions that promote children's health and well-being (DBE, 2012). The designated school health nurse provides school health services and health education to prevent challenges that may contribute to learning barriers (DBE, 2012). However, research revealed that the school health programmes have not yet reached all South African schools (DoH, 2015).

Furthermore, the limited number of school health nurses makes it difficult to frequently visit the schools and provide adequate time and attention to learners (DoH, 2015). The neglected learners and those exposed to intimate partner violence are often unnoticed at schools due to insufficient school health nurses. The teachers are not well trained to identify learners experiencing various adversities on a daily basis. The lack of psychosocial support for learners during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced fear in children. Moreover, the lack of designated school social worker, psychologist, and counsellor to provide psychosocial support to learners and teachers in managing the stress, anxiety, and health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic heightened the fear of young children (Ramukumba et al., 2019).

5.2.1.10 Sub-theme 5: Chronosystem

L8B8M drew himself alone in the house. His drawing looks very small and confined in a small space, indicating his high level of fear (Jolley, 2009). He drew himself with small arms and legs, which could mean that he was helpless and defenceless. According to Jolley (2009), young children draw small drawings to distance themselves from a fearful topic and show a defensive response. In his drawing, he used a black crayon to colour the two windows, which could mean that it was during the night. It looks like L8B8M is scared of the darkness. His facial expression shows no eyes or ears, which could mean that he did not see anyone nor hear any sound from outside. It seems that L8B8M had no idea what was happening outside the house. He also drew a small picture that looked like a ghost carrying a weapon in his hand and coloured it with a black crayon. During the interview, he commented:

Every night when I look through the window, I see a dark shadow with a dark face that goes there and there. I don't know the name, but I always see it at home. Then, when I tell my father to look, my father sees nothing. I only see this person at night, but when my father goes outside to check, he does not see anyone. I am the only one who sees this person. If I turn the lights off, the ghost comes again.

Gullone (2000) acknowledges that it is normal for eight-to-nine-year-old children to experience fear of monsters, ghosts, and dark shadows at night. Clearly, L8B8M still has imaginary thinking that creates fear in him. This is supported by Piaget (1962) in his cognitive development theory. Although eight-to-nine-year-old children begin to develop logical thinking skills, they still have imaginary thoughts. From his comments, it looks like he is experiencing fear frequently as he commented: '*I always see it at home.'* When young children are persistently exposed to fearful situations, it may expose them to what (Evans et al., 2012) named chronic fears. This may result in headaches, stomachaches, tiredness, dizziness, and chest pains.

CHILDREN LIVING IN HIGH SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Picture 5-3 below illustrates the features of the drawings from children living in high socio-economic status

Scared of nightmares   Scared of witnessing bullying
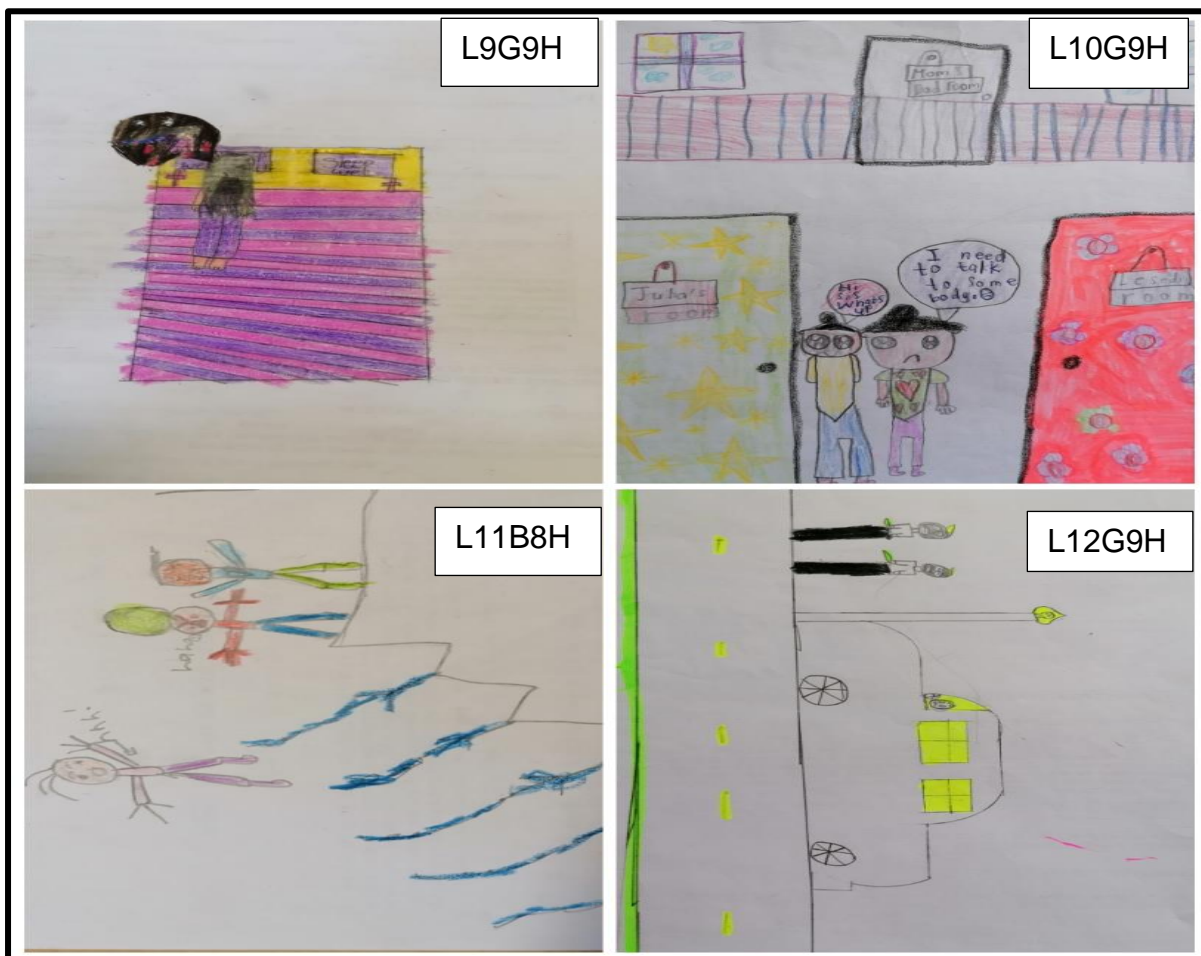
Scared of the thieves   Scared of kidnapping

Picture 0-3: Features of the drawings from children living in high socio-economic status

5.2.1.11 Sub-theme 1: Microsystem

L9G9H drew herself sleeping alone on the bed. On top of her head, she drew a black shark and red dots. The use of the colour black in children's drawings is associated with fear and oppression (Burkitt et al., 2003). During the interview, she commented:

I was sleeping, and I had a nightmare of a shark eating me. I am scared when I see blood coming out from me, when the shark was following me.

As indicated by Burkitt et al. (2003), red in children's drawings represents repressed anger. However, if not used often, it could indicate that the child is energetic. She drew bold strokes on the bed. The drawing of bold strokes can be a sign of stress or strong feelings such as fear or anger (Burkitt et al., 2003). L9G9H used the black crayon to colour her body. According to Burkitt et al. (2003), black in children's drawings is associated with fear and

oppression. Burkitt et al. (2003) explain that the colour black means that the child is suppressing her emotions so that she appears to be a good child. It could be possible that the child is afraid to be scolded by their parents, and they may be watching her reactions. L9G9H could be angry and scared due to strict discipline from their parents. This is supported by the T3 when she commented:

They fear telling their parents if they did something wrong.

It seems that parents of high socio-economic status impose strict discipline on their children.

On the other hand, L10G9H drew herself and her sister left alone in the house. She drew a house, and she added flowers to the doors. When children add a house to their drawing, they may work through issues with their family and immediate social environment (Atmore, 2012). Several children added houses to their drawings. The house in children's drawings symbolises emotions and stability desired for home life. L10G9H drew two closed windows, indicating that she wants people to see what is happening in the house. She drew big pictures and used the whole A4 paper for her drawing, which could mean that she needs attention from the home environment.

5.2.1.12 Sub-theme 2: Mesosystem

5.2.1.12.1 Bullying

During the interviews, L10G9H indicated that she needed to talk to her sister because she saw her friend being bullied at school. L10G9H drew herself with hollowed eyes, which is associated with fear and aggression (Jolley, 2009). Her facial expression depicts an upturned mouth, which means she was unhappy when she saw bullying happening to her friend at school. She drew the large size of her face to show her sad facial expression. She drew herself with long arms and hands, which could mean that she wanted to retaliate against the bullying at school. It is clear that L10G9H did not like bullying, and she was scared of witnessing other children bullying her friend.

5.2.1.13 Sub-theme 3: Exosystem

5.2.1.13.1 Extended family

According to Kang (2019), extended family can have a negative impact on young children. During the interviews, L10G9H indicated that her:

Grandfather always shouts at her grandmother because he has anger issues about his job.

The grandfather seems to have problems at work, such as working long hours or a low salary. As indicated by Zhou (2018), parents may experience great stress due to job problems and financial issues that cause conflict and violence at home. It is clear that although L10G9H had no control over what was happening in her grandfather's job, she was indirectly affected by the grandfather's employment. Her grandfather was unhappy at work, and as a result, he caused conflict in the home.

The data shows that L10G9H was not happy when she saw her grandparents shouting at each other. It looks like L10G9H never shared loving moments with her grandparents. She was exposed to conflict between her grandparents. In this regard, the extended family contributed negatively to her healthy development and well-being. The stress of her grandfather due to job problems influenced the instabilities of the home environment. Although Gaydosh (2015) believed that care from relatives or kin may buffer the adversities and negative consequences of parental absence, Kang (2019) argues that living with extended family may have negative consequences for children, especially regarding fear and insecurities. From this perspective, it can be said that L10G9H felt insecure and experienced high fear levels when she witnessed the conflict at home.

5.2.1.13.2 Community violence

L11B8H drew his parents with a sad facial expression. The facial expression of both parents depicts very angry faces, showing a clear frown and down-turned mouths as well as unhappy eyes. L11B8H used the colour red, blue, and green for his parents. According to Burkitt et al. (2003), the blue and green colours are associated with calmness and well-being, resulting in a relaxed child. Burkitt et al. (2003) explain that red represents intense anger if used more often. However, in this case, it was not used often, which may indicate that L11B8H was energetic. He drew the spikes that were used to hijack his parents. During the interview, he commented that: *'I feel scared when the thieves hijacked my parents.'*

L11B8H drew his father without his hands. The absence of hands in the drawing could possibly mean that the father was non-aggressive and helpless (Jolley, 2009). The mother was drawn with outstretched arms and hands, which could imply that she retaliated to the harm. The third person, who seemed to be a thief, looked happy with a wide-open mouth. The speech bubble of the thief says: 'hahaha', which could indicate joyfulness. The thief was drawn with long arms and hands, which represent going towards the two parents. It looks like the thief had succeeded in criminal activities because his speech bubbles indicate: 'hahaha'.

Moreover, L12G9H drew her grandparents experiencing hijacking. During the interview, she commented:

I felt scared when my grandparents were kidnapped. I think that they will kidnap me.

She used a black colour for both grandparents. The use of the colour black in children's drawings is associated with fear and oppression (Burkitt et al., 2003). She drew both her grandparents with short arms. As indicated by Jolley (2009), short arms in a drawing mean that the two grandparents were helpless and non-aggressive. It looks like both grandparents were scared as their facial expression depicts hollowed eyes and downturned mouth.

5.2.1.14 Sub-theme 4: Macrosystem

5.2.1.14.1 Lack of psychosocial support

The DBE is causing increased fear by not offering support services to the learners witnessing bullying and various social problems. The integrated school health policy aims to address the immediate learners' health problems (including those that constitute barriers to learning) and implement interventions that can promote children's health and well-being (DBE, 2012). The designated school health nurse provides health services and education to prevent challenges that may contribute to learning barriers (DBE, 2012). However, research revealed that the school health programmes have not yet reached all South African schools. Furthermore, the limited number of school health nurses makes it difficult for them to frequently visit the schools and provide adequate time and attention to learners (DoH, 2015). Learners who experience bullying often go unnoticed at schools due to insufficient school health nurses. The teachers are not well trained to handle bullying and other adversities the learners face. The lack of psychosocial support for learners during the COVID-19 pandemic increased fearful emotions in young children. Moreover, the lack of a designated school social worker, psychologist, and counsellor to provide psychosocial support to learners and teachers in managing the stress, anxiety and health issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, heighten the fear of young children.

5.2.1.15 Sub-theme 5: Chronosystem

L9G9H drew herself sleeping on the bed. She drew bold strokes on her bed, which could signify stress and strong feelings such as fear or anger. On top of her head, she drew a shark eating a little girl. During the interview, she commented:

I was sleeping, and I had a nightmare of the shark eating me.

According to Gullone (2000), it is normal for eight-to-nine years old children to experience nightmares. Piaget (1962) acknowledges that although eight-to-nine years begin to think rationally and logically, it is important to note that they still have imaginary thoughts. This age group can produce a clear picture of the television programme they watch before sleeping, which in turn, causes fear. In other words, L9G9H believes that a shark can come to her bedroom and eat her. As a result, she experiences a strong feeling of fearfulness. Moller (2017) warned that when children are exposed to consistent and prolonged fear, they may experience headache, stomach-ache, tiredness, dizziness, and diarrhoea.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Children's solution to fearful experiences

The second theme was to determine how the children handle fearfulness. This section presents young children's solutions to cope with fear. This section begins with the children's solutions from the low socio-economic background, middle-income class, and lastly high socio-economic status.

5.2.2.1 Low socio-economic background

During the interviews, L1G9L indicated:

When I'm scared, I run to my bed. I hide with my blankets on the bed.

Runcan (2012) agrees that young children need a safe, conducive, and secure home environment to feel protected. Webb (2012) concedes that young children who are left alone and lack parents' protection feel unloved and unwanted. When young children feel unloved and unprotected, they have trouble building strong and trusting relationships with their parents/caregivers (Currie & Spatz Widom, 2010). In other words, young children who lack protection at home lack trust in their parents/caregivers to provide care and emotional support, leaving them with feelings of fear and insecurity. In so doing, young children who lack protection at home learn not to trust their parents/caregivers to provide help (Filip et al., 2019). The home environment that was supposed to provide love, warmth, support, and

safety instead leaves young children trying to care for themselves and consequently experience fear and insecurities (Sandstrom & Huerta, 2013).

On the other hand, L2G8L and L4B9L reported that they distance themselves from the fearful situation. L2G8L indicated that she isolates herself from her parents' fighting and cries. Ånonsen (2014) emphasise the importance of love, warmth, and emotional support of parent/caregivers towards their children. Ånonsen (2014) maintains that parents who hurt their children emotionally and neglect the emotional needs of their children or expose them to domestic violence teach children that the home environment equals a dangerous place (Anonsen, 2014). When the young child's home environment becomes a dangerous place, the child may develop feelings of fear and insecurity (Bouwer & Ebersohn, 2015). In this way, children use various ways to protect themselves from fearful situations. Thus, they detach, withdraw and distance themselves from their parents (Hussain & Warr, 2019). Webb (2012) acknowledge that young children exposed to violence at home lack a sense of belonging and feel unwanted. Consequently, they experience a lack of love and acceptance and low self-confidence. Øverlien and Holt (2019) assert that young children exposed to violence do not trust their parents to care for and protect them; as a result, they experience fear and insecurities. From this perspective, Filip et al. (2019) postulate that young children growing up in an unconducive home environment have trouble building close and trusting relationships with parents/caregivers' relationships; hence they distance themselves.

Furthermore, L2G8L indicated that she cried when she experienced fear. It may be that she found herself in a situation beyond her control and did not have words to express her feelings. When young children consider the environment fearful, they often cry, as they cannot control their emotions. Hence, they remove themselves from the fearful situation (Fox & Shonkoff, 2012). Adams (2011) agree that crying is an emotional reaction that young children display when faced with fearful situations that they cannot resolve and cope with.

On the other hand, L3G9L commented:

When I am scared, I tell my teacher.

It may be possible that L3G9L found comfort in talking to the teacher. The researcher believes the teacher listened and supported the child during fearful experiences. Teachers play a significant role in protecting and supporting the emotional needs of young children (Panter-Brick et al., 2011). Bronfenbrenner (2005) acknowledged that a caring, attentive, and supportive teacher could create a positive and safe environment over a long period to

enhance self-esteem and provide security in young children. White (2016) concurred that young children often feel safe and secure with teachers who display respect and kindness and listen to them. In this study, the teacher became a protective source to the children by supporting them in dealing with fearful situations.

5.2.2.2   Middle-income background

During the interview, L5G9M indicated:

When I'm scared, I jump out of the window and go to the babysitter. I feel better when I speak to my little sister.

She explained that she often talks to her little sister when she is scared. This means that she found comfort when talking to his little sister. It could be possible that L5G9M never had a close relationship with her parents, as she trusted the babysitter to provide care and protection. Bouwer & Ebersohn (2015) maintain that when young children do not trust their parents to provide help and protection, they consider the environment to be an unsafe place to live in. The parents did not create a home environment filled with care and protection. It seems that the parents were not always available to comfort and reassure L5G9M of her safety.

During the questioning, L6G8M commented:

When I am scared, I talk to a flower. I tell it that I am too scared.

L6G8M never mentioned reporting the bullying to the teacher. It could be that the teacher was not supportive and did not listen to the children when they reported bullying incidents in school. Mupa and Chinooneka (2019) point out that some teachers do not pay attention to the learners and display low support. In this regard, White (2016) states that when teachers ignore the socio-emotional needs of the learners, then effective teaching and learning are compromised. Building a secure, trusting relationship with teachers in school is particularly difficult for many poor children in the minority group. In this way, obtaining good academic performance in school may be difficult for young children of colour because they often perceive a negative image from the white middle-class socio-economic status teacher. Most teachers react negatively verbally to discipline the learners in the classroom. This was confirmed by L7B9M when he commented: '*The teacher shouts with an angry face.*' Hogan, Ricci, and Ryan (2019) state that the negative verbal comments of the teacher, including rejecting, humiliating, and degrading the learners in the classroom, may cause fearfulness.

The school for the middle-income class seem to be very unstable. The researcher believes that teachers in middle-income schools often lack sensitivity towards the children, increasing their fear.

On the other hand, L7B9M responded: '*When I'm scared, I talk to my friends.*' It seems that L7B9M found comfort in interacting with his peers. Perolli-Shehu (2019:27) postulates that "from an early age, the child feels the need to befriend someone, a need that later develops in their constant need for friendships". Peer relationships play a big and significant role in developing socio-emotional skills and present young children with the opportunities to interact and socialise with peers, thus providing a good opportunity to minimize fear and adapt to their environment (Rubin et al., 2015). Pepler, Craig, Cummings, Petrunka & Garwood (2017) highlight the significance of peer relations in the lives of young children and the potential it has for socio-emotional development. In other words, peer relationships may contribute positively towards the socio-emotional development of young children if the eight to nine years old have learned social skills such as seeking and offering assistance and showing empathy towards others.

Furthermore, L8B8M commented: '*When I am scared, I tell my daddy.*' It seems that L8B8M trusts his parents to provide help and protection. It could be that L8B8M has a strong relationship with his parents. The researcher believes that L8B8M received love, warmth, and support from his parents. Hence, he trusts his parents to provide care and protection. Sandstrom and Huerta (2013) maintain that parents/caregivers should provide young children with love, support, security, and stability. Runcan (2012:11) agrees with the previous researchers that parents need to build a conducive atmosphere of safety and trust within the home environment. In other words, young children who are given love, warmth, and emotional support build strong and trusting relationships with their parents/caregivers. When young children receive love, a sense of belonging and acceptance from their parents, they experience a sense of security and protection (Patel, 2019). From this perspective, it is clear that L8B8M experienced low levels of fear as he certainly knew that his parents were always there to comfort him.

5.2.2.3 High socio-economic status

L9G9H commented:

When I'm scared, I talk to my friends. My friends make me feel better when I am scared.

Rubin et al. (2015) acknowledge that peer relationships play a big and significant role in developing socio-emotional skills and present young children with the opportunities to interact and socialise with peers, thus providing a good opportunity to reduce fearfulness and adapt to their environment. Peers play a big role in supporting each other. L9G9H trusts her peers to provide the support that makes her feel better. From the picture, it was clear that L9G9H has a good relationship with her friends.

On the other hand, L10G9H responded:

I feel better when my mom calms me down. Yes, my mommy makes me feel better.

There seems to be a trusting relationship between L10G9H and her parents. L10G9H also indicated: *'I call my mother when I am scared.'* L10G9H also spoke about the support of the siblings. She responded:

I feel better when I speak to my sister and baby brother. My baby brother calms me down and says – do not cry. I am here.

She felt safe and secure when she spoke to her siblings. It seemed that the children of high socio-economic status are provided with love, warmth, and support from the home environment. They are united and try to comfort each other. The researcher believes that the high socio-economic status home environment seems stable, as the children trust their parents and siblings to provide comfort and support when they feel scared. Patel (2019) reckons that parents who provide encouragement and emotional support reduce young children's level of fear because, when children are confronted with a fearful situation, they have the conviction that their parents will provide an environment where they may experience safety and security. In this way, young children from high socio-economic status develop good attachment and nurturing with their parents/caregivers. Thus, they develop a sense of security and fearlessness. Morris et al. (2017) concurs that young children from high socio-economic status spend quality time interacting with their parents, thereby gaining emotional support.

On the other hand, L12G9H commented: '*When I am scared, I need my grandmother's love to feel better.*' It seems that L12G9H received love, care, and warmth from her grandparents. She found comfort with her grandparents. It could be that the grandparents provide the emotional needs of L12G9H. The grandparents seem to support and encourage L12G9H. From the data, it was clear that she felt safe and protected with her grandparents.

Extended families play a very important role in shaping the meaning of family for these children. In the same group studied, extended families greatly resource the children and parents. Gaydosh (2015) indicated that care and support from relatives or kin can protect the child against fearful experiences. Data from this research showed that L11B8H regarded his extended family members as a great source of protection. He felt safe and protected when left with his grandparents. The strong relationships outside the nuclear family contributed positively to the child's positive emotional development.

This is important because, in most societies, there has been a decline in the involvement and closeness of extended families. When children have contact with their extended families, they develop a sense of togetherness and become inseparable. This is interwoven with the element of safety and a sense of belonging. From the data, it is clear that L11B8H receives love, care, and warmth from his extended families, which are necessary to develop confidence and the capability to express their emotional needs. The child had faith that his extended family would take care of his emotional needs. This last point is a very important consideration for the child's developing sense of security and safety.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Parents' voices regarding fear among learners

Theme 3 was to determine the voices of parents/caregivers in supporting young children experiencing fear. The section presents parents/caregivers' support in three different socio-economic statuses. This section begins with the analysis of the parents' support given to young children experiencing fear from the low socio-economic background, middle socio-economic status, and high socio-economic status.

5.2.3.1 Low socio-economic class

During the interviews, P1 commented:

I hug her, and speak with her and give her money to buy some chocolate.

P2 responded:

I help her to stop crying. Sometimes, I buy some sweeties to make her feel better.

Parents from low socio-economic backgrounds seemed to go the extra mile to care for and comfort their children during fearful experiences. The parents from low socio-economic backgrounds seemed to empathise with their children. It is of utmost significance to build a

trusting relationship with young children so that they can rely on their parents/caregivers for help (Morris et al., 2017). P2 indicated:

I speak to her very nicely. I tell her that I love her very much. Then I calm her down.

Patel (2019) reckons that parents/caregivers who show love and emotional support build a strong and trusting relationship with their children, thus, decreasing fear in young children. In this way, the children can trust their parents to protect them and keep them safe. Ngai et al. (2013) reiterate the importance of a positive parent-child relationship filled with trust and encouragement to decrease fearful feelings and increase children's independence to deal with emotions.

On the other hand, P3 and P4 encouraged their children to become brave. P3 commented: *'I tell her to stop crying and fight back against her peers who are bullying her.'* P4 responded: *'I sit next to him and speak with him. I tell him that he must find a way to deal with his fears.'* Both P3 and P4 encouraged her child to be brave through verbalisation. Parents encourage the bravery strategy to help their children regulate and cope with fearful situations, consequently assisting them in adapting to their environment (Barros et al., 2015). Barros et al. (2015) believe that when parents use the bravery strategy, they encourage their children to confront fearful experiences and become independent to cope with frightening situations.

Furthermore, P3 and P4 felt helpless about the things that caused fear in their children. P3 commented: *'There is nothing I can do because I can't sit with her in the class. She will grow up and fight for herself.'* P4 reported: '*There is no way I can help him with his fears because he will still experience many things that will scare him in his life.'* The researcher believes that P3 and P4 felt helpless in supporting their children to overcome fearful experiences. The researcher believes that both P3 and P4 lacked control over the things that influenced fearful experiences in their children, and both believed that the fear of their children would be over when they grew up.

On the other hand, Webb (2012) warns that ignoring children's feelings may increase the level of fear in young children. The lack of emotional support may cause children to think that they are unworthy and less important, thereby influencing the high level of fear in young children. Neglecting the emotional needs of young children may cause young children to feel unwanted and unaccepted and consequently experience a lack of protection and increased fear (Hussain & Warr, 2019).

5.2.3.2 Middle-income background

The parents of middle-income backgrounds used a reassurance strategy to make young children feel better. P5 and P6 responded that they comfort and reassure their children. P5 responded: *'I comfort and reassure her that I am always there for her.'* P6 reported: *'I hold, hug, and calm the child down.'* Comforting children help them reduce their level of fear and feel secure. It seemed that the parents were supportive and caring for their children. The parents ensured the children had all the comforts they could provide to make their home a conducive and safe place. It is essential for parents or caregivers to create a warm home environment that enables children to gain love and support, and a sense of belonging (Patel, 2019). A safe home environment provides children with a sense of security and also protects them.

The researcher believes that when parents re-assure young children, they make them feel safe and secure. Young children's feelings of security and safety come from a responsive parent/caregiver. Reassurance and comfort are positive responses from parents/caregivers to make their children feel better. Darling-Churchill and Lippman (2016) acknowledge that positive attention, reaction, and parents' responses help form a trusting relationship with children. In other words, young children trust their parents/caregivers to provide comfort and reassurance. Sandstrom and Huerta (2013) reiterate that parents who are responsive and attentive influence a sense of being secure and loved.

Beato et al. (2017) acknowledge that reassurance is a simple strategy that parents use to calm down their children. Beato et al. (2017) argue that a reassurance strategy may help young children to feel better for a short period and does not teach young children to regulate fearful emotions. Thus, children often depend on their parents/caregivers to assure them (Beato et al., 2017). This was evident from the comments of P5*: 'If it is nothing to be scared of, I tell her.'* However, in the long term, the reassurance strategy may influence a great amount of fear in young children, as they often need parents to assure them (Verhoeven et al., 2012).

On the other hand, P7 and P8 encouraged the child to be brave. During the interviews, P7 indicated:

I yell at him to stop crying and face his fears. I help him to become brave and kill the spider.

P8 commented: *'I tell him to face his fears. I help him to kill the scary things.'* It seemed that both P7 and P8 displayed support by encouraging the children to approach the frightening situation. Encouragement of bravery is a strategy that involves interactions or comments from parents/caregivers, which encourage and reinforce the child to confront fearful situations (Beato et al., 2017). It could be that both P7 and P8 believed that encouraging the child to face a fearful situation would decrease the child's fear level. Barros et al. (2015) agree that parents encouraging bravery help their children regulate and cope with fearful situations, consequently assisting them in adapting to their environment.

Furthermore, the researcher noted that P7 used a negative strategy to respond to the fearful experiences of the child. P7 responded:

I shout at him and ask him how he could become scared of spiders at his age. I yell at him and tell him to stop screaming when he sees the spider, ah.....he makes too much noise.

The researcher believes that P7 lacked empathy for the fears of her child. It could be that P7 believed that her child was overreacting. The researcher believes that P7 did not have the knowledge to support the child; hence, she was impatient and frustrated with her child's fearful experiences.

5.2.3.3   High socio-economic status

During the questioning, P9 responded*: 'When she is scared, I usually accommodate her in my bedroom, and I cuddle and be around her.'* P10 commented:

I comfort him and reassure her that there is nothing to be afraid of. Sometimes, I read the story that is about the darkness and explain to her that there is nothing to be scared of. I assure her that her daddy and I will protect her.

On the other hand, P12 indicated, *'I sometimes spend a night in her bedroom to comfort her and make sure that she feels safe.'* The parents living in high socio-economic status seemed to use a reassurance strategy to comfort the children. P11 also mentioned: *'I hug him and speak to him to make him forget.'* It seemed that this study's parents from a high socio-economic status had a good relationship with the children. As indicated by Patel (2019), parents who provide love, warmth, and support reduce fear in young children. Ngai et al. (2013) reiterate the importance of a positive parent-child relationship, characterised by love, trust, and emotional support, to enable young children to cope with fears. Hennessey (2015) holds a similar view to Ngai et al. (2013). They acknowledge that positive parent-child

interactions provide secure attachment and emotional support to young children to flourish and help reduce the risk of developing negative feelings such as fear, which can potentially interfere with children's adjustment to their environment.

Ngai et al. (2013:91) posit that a parent-child relationship that involves "listening, availability, understanding and respecting children's feelings" benefits young children as they again feel loved, worthy, and accepted, thus leaving them with feelings of security and fearlessness. The parents in this study had a critical role to play in ensuring that their children felt safe and protected. Runcan (2012) concurs that the increased amount of time parents spends interacting and comforting their children builds a sense of trust and reassurance that they are protected. This was confirmed by P12, who commented:

I talk to her a lot about her fears. Yes, we have a very good parent-child relationship. She can talk about anything with me. Yes, we have open communication.

The researcher believes that the parents in this study had a strong relationship with their children, which was important for them to gain a sense of acceptance and protection.

However, researchers such as Beato et al. (2017) postulate that the reassurance strategy provides comfort to young children for a short term. In the long term, this strategy may increase high levels of fear as young children depend on their parents to protect them. Beato et al. (2017) argue that the reassurance strategy does not teach young children independence and to regulate their own fears. Instead, it encourages them to depend on their parents. This was evident when P9 commented: '*They tell me when they are not okay. If it is scary, they may feel scared.'*

5.2.4 Theme 4: Teachers' strategies for handling fearfulness in learners

5.2.4.1 Low socio-economic class

The school play a huge role in addressing learners' fearfulness. T1 responded:

I usually tell them stories that I think they can relate to and address their fears. Then we discuss ways to make our environment safe.

We discuss safety and protection in the classroom. The school should be a welcoming and caring environment for all learners. A caring and attentive teacher can provide a positive learning environment that boosts self-esteem and minimises the insecurities of learners (White, 2016). From my field notes, there was evidence that children felt safe and secure with

the teachers who showed respect and care and listened to them during everyday interaction in the classroom. Children were smiling and interacting, although they showed signs of fear in their drawings. Zhang and Nurmi (2012) confirm that a warm and safe classroom environment with adequate teacher support effectively reduces young children's fearful emotions, shows good classroom behaviour, and interacts well with others. Usman and Madudili (2019) reckon that a caring and attentive teacher who is supportive increase the success of learners' academic performance. The school environment seems to be stable.

During the interviews, T1 commented: *'I assure learners of their safety and protection in the classroom. I discuss safety and protection in the classroom.'* The teacher also believes that the drawings could be useful in assisting the learners in expressing their emotions. She stated: *'Teachers can ask learners to draw pictures about the things and situations that express their emotions.'* As Alford (2015) indicated, drawing is a valuable tool that enables children to make meaning. The researcher believes that children can think deeply about their drawings and provide meaningful information. Thus, drawings allow teachers to obtain in-depth knowledge of how children view and perceive the environment in which they live (Pope, et al., 2012).

5.2.4.2 Middle-income class

During the interviews, T2 stated: *'If I have time to talk to them one-on-one, I can explain how the situation can be solved and how the fear is not as bad as it seems to them.'* T2 indicated that the drawings might help the learners express their emotions. In her response, she commented that sometimes kids do not have the words to explain a certain fear successfully. Drawings can show all their fears and which ones are more severe. As Alford (2015) indicated, drawings are significant techniques children can use to express their emotions freely and reflect on their inner thoughts. Terreni (2010) reckons drawing is a way for young children to communicate and convey their thoughts to others. In this regard, Pope et al. (2012) asserts that drawing gives children a voice much more expressively than their words alone do. Therefore, teachers learnt from my study that drawings from the children are a way of encouraging children to think deeply about their pictures.

Moreover, T2 responded:

It depends on the reason for fear. If I fear being bullied or alone at school, I will get other children to play with that child and speak to bullies.

Coplan et al. (2011) agree that it is important for teachers to use social support strategies that include collaboration with other peers in the classroom to decrease loneliness. Using social support strategies by encouraging children experiencing fear to work collaboratively with classmates and praising them for appropriate behaviour assists young children in coping with fear, as this strategy enhances social and problem-solving skills (Deng et al., 2017).

5.2.4.3   High socio-economic status

During the interviews, the teachers indicated that drawings are significant in helping learners express their emotions. The response of T3 confirmed this. T3 stated: *'Sometimes it works very well, and yes, you can learn a lot about the learners.'* However, T3 also discussed the disadvantages of using the drawings. She stated:

Sometimes children are clever and know why you want them to draw, and they will not draw something that you can learn anything about their feelings.

The researcher believes that drawings are a method that teachers can use in the classroom to assist learners in expressing their emotions. This is important as it helps the teacher understand the children's drawings and what they think as they draw (Pope et al., 2012).

During the interview, T3 commented:

We are really trying hard to be positive and not to cause fear in children. I would call them and speak to them and assure them that I am always there for them to speak about their problems. I try to be more compassionate towards these learners.

Zhang and Nurmi (2012) indicated that it is important for learners to receive support and attention from the teachers. White (2016) acknowledge that teachers who provide warmth and support are more likely to form close teacher-child relationships with the learners and are more likely to influence a sense of security in young children because children feel comfortable interacting with teachers who are kind, patient, and supportive.

White (2016:30) argues that young children often feel safe and secure with teachers who display "respect, listening to them, talking to them, and making eye contact with them during everyday communication" in the classroom. In this regard, Kalutskaya et al. (2015) reiterate that the relationship between the teacher and child, filled with support and encouragement, may reduce fear in the learners and increase successful academic performance. Field notes during the observation also showed that the teacher seemed kind and caring towards the

learners and tried to make a safe learning environment that provided a sense of security. The school environment seemed to be stable. Since this was a high SES school, resources were adequate, and teachers were content with the number of children in their classrooms.

Furthermore, T3 indicated*: 'I try doing a flip class with the whole class and see if this will help them to be calmer.'* Nyborg et al. (2022) postulate that teachers use social support strategies in supporting young children experiencing fear. The social support strategy involves structuring classroom activities to increase participation and encouraging children experiencing fear to play with other children, thereby decreasing loneliness (Coplan et al., 2011). These authors believe that when teachers use social support strategies, including verbal encouragement and expression of warm approval as well as positive reinforcement, it enables young children experiencing fear to cope (Coplan et al., 2011). The use of social support strategies by encouraging children experiencing fear to work collaboratively with classmates and praising them for appropriate behaviour assists young children in coping with fear, as this strategy enhances social skills and problem-solving skills (Deng et al., 2017).

5.3   SUMMARY

Table 5-3 on the next page summarises the voices of the children, what created fear among the children, and how children find solace and calm themselves. It also shows how parents and teachers support their children when they undergo fearful experiences

Table 0-3: Summary of findings from children, parents, and teachers

Case	Child's fear	Solution of the child	Parent support	Teacher support
Dorah	She is the first-born child, with two siblings. She is scared of being alone during heavy rain and thunderstorm.	She runs to the bed and covers herself with blankets when she is scared.	She spent longer hours helping her husband to sell fruits and vegetables in town. She hugs and speak with her and give her money to buy some chocolate.	She reads the story books that children can relate to and discuss ways to address fear. She speaks one-on-one with the child.
Morapedi	She is the first-born child, with one sibling. She feels scared when mom and dad are shouting and fighting at home.	When she sees mom and dad fighting, she goes to her room and cries.	He speaks to her very nicely. He tells her that he loves her very much. Then he buys her some lollipops to calm her down.	She speaks one-on-one with the child. She discusses ways to resolve the fear.
Sele	She is an only child. She is scared of bullying.	She distances herself and walk away.	She tells her daughter to stop crying and fight back.	She read the story books that children can relate to and discusses ways to address fear.
Themba	He is the last child. He is scared of shooting and murder.	He distances himself and runs away from the threatening situation.	She sits and speaks with him. She tells him that he must find a way to cope with his fears.	She speaks one-on-one with the child and also read the story books that children can relate to and discuss ways to address fear.
Unice	She is the first-born child. She is scared of being alone in the house, in darkness, and of her parents fighting.	She runs and jumps out of the window to the babysitter's house.	She calms and comforts her daughter. She assures her that she will be fine.	She sits one-on-one with the child.
Oarabilwe	She is the last-born child. She is scared of parents fighting, horror television content, and bullying.	When she is scared, she speaks to a flower.	She holds, hugs, and calms the child down.	She asks other children to play with Oarabilwe and makes one-on-one conversations with the child.
Matshwene	He is the last-born child, with two sisters. He is scared of	When he is scared, he speaks to his friends.	He yells at him to stop crying and face his fears. He helps	She tries to make school a safe place. She talks one-on-

Case	Child's fear	Solution of the child	Parent support	Teacher support
	the teacher shouting with an angry face.		him to be become brave and kill the spider.	one and explains how the situation can be solved.
Bohlale	He is an only child. He is scared of thieves.	When he is scared, he runs to his parent's bedroom.	She tells him to face his fears. She helps him to kill the scary thing.	She talks to the child individually to assess the situation and tries to solve it.
Tumishang	She is the second born child. She is scared of the darkness and nightmares.	When she is scared, she runs to her parents' bedroom.	She accommodates her in her bedroom. She calms her down and comforts her.	She speaks to them kindly and assures them that she will always be there for them to speak about problems.
Taylor	She is the last-born child. She is scared when she sees other children bullying her friend.	When she is scared, she tells her sister.	She reads stories to comfort her. She assures her mother and father will protect her.	She tries to be more positive and compassionate towards the child.
Bongani	He is an only child. He is scared of the thieves.	When he is scared, he tells his mother.	She hugs him and tries to make him forget about fear.	She tries not to create fear in the child. She remains positive and speaks to the child.
Oratilwe	She is the last-born child. She is scared of kidnapping.	When she is scared, she calls the police.	She spends a night in her bedroom to comfort her and ensures she feels safe.	She speaks to the child. She remains positive and tries to be more compassionate.

The data analysed and interpreted in this chapter was about the eco-systemic factors that influenced the experiences of fear in young children. The young children living in the low socio-economic status were scared of domestic violence, bullying, shooting, and murder. It seemed that their fear came from the home environment, and external factors in the community, such as shooting and murder, worsened the fearful emotions. The fear of young children in the middle-income class seemed to be influenced by external factors such as bullying, teacher's negative attitude, and crime. Although the home environment of young children living in the middle-income and high socio-economic status seemed stable, spreading love and enjoyment, these children were scared of violent television programmes. When parents were busy, they did not seem to control what movies these children were watching, and horror movies created emotional disturbances. The external factors in the community, such as crime and kidnapping, worsen the fearful emotions of these children. High SES children faced burglaries and hijacking, which brought about their fearful experiences. However, fearful experiences were prevalent in all SES classrooms sampled, and the importance of training teachers (in-service and preservice) became essential.

The next chapter describes and summarises my findings, conclusions, and recommendations, which are the significant contributions of my study.

CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focused on the eco-systemic factors influencing the experiences of fear in young children. Therefore, the study explored how the use of drawings and teachers' and parents' interviews can assist one in gaining a deeper understanding of the eco-systemic factors causing fear in young children. The interpretations that came from the teacher and parents' interviews and learners' drawings encouraged the perspectives presented on the factors that cause fear in young children.

The empirical data findings were delivered in Chapter five. This chapter presents the control of the literature using a particular framework. The sections of this chapter compare the existing literature to the actual results of the empirical research, thus presenting findings that differ from the empirical research and that were silent from the existing literature. The limitations were looked into, pointing out the possible contributions this study may deliver. The conclusions and recommendations presented in this chapter will add to the policy and practices for teacher and parent engagement to support and assist children from all SES groups in South Africa and perhaps other African countries with similar problems.

6.2 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

Chapter one delivered the overview of the research. The introduction, background, research problem, and rationale were presented. It set out the purpose of the study, namely, to describe and explore the eco-systemic factors influencing young children's experiences of fear. Furthermore, the research problem was explained, and the research questions were stated, ultimately guiding the study. The purpose of the study and research questions directed the design and methodology. Based on the purpose and aim of the study, the key concepts were clarified, and the theoretical framework that underpinned the study was adopted.

In chapter two, I read and reviewed national and international literature on the eco-systemic factors influencing fearful experiences among young children. The literature review was structured into broad sections to discuss the factors causing fear in the biological/innate environment, home, school context, and community. This chapter discussed the parenting styles to highlight how parents can influence fear in young children. The effects of prolonged

fear on young children's development and the strategies to assist young children in coping with fear were also deliberated.

Chapter three explained the theoretical framework underpinned by this study. The study took a deeper view of the eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children. This was done by applying Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory and the support that the child may receive from each layer.

In chapter four, I highlighted the key questions again and discussed the qualitative approach and the interpretivism paradigm. The discussion on the role of the researcher and the description of the purposive sampling of grade three children, teachers, and parents were clarified. The research approach and paradigm of the study were significant as they guided the researcher's methods and provided the opportunity for the population to generate their own lived experiences relating to the study's phenomenon. Chapter four further discussed the data collection methods and explained the trustworthiness of the study. The ethical considerations were also adhered to and addressed in detail.

In chapter five, I reported on the research findings and data analysis. The data analysis was done by sorting the data and identifying the emerging themes that correspond to the literature review and the theoretical framework. Moreover, the themes were derived based on how they addressed the key questions and the layers according to the theoretical framework. The data analysis and findings were presented based on the participants' responses and combined with the researcher's interpretative discussions.

6.3   FINDINGS IN TERMS OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory helped me prepare the study's conceptual framework. Since this theory puts the developing child at the centre of the framework, young children's drawings and narratives were employed as the primary method for data collection.

The children's drawings and the parents and teachers' interviews aided me in generating the themes and sub-themes, as shown in Figure 6-1. The sub-themes were differentiated according to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory. Table 5-1 illustrated the main themes and subthemes that guided the analysis and recommendations of this study.

The data show that children from low, middle, and high socio-economic statuses are all exposed to fearful experiences. Children are exposed to similar fears, although they come from different SES economies. However, parental and teacher support seemed to differ in

how children are soothed. Middle SES children seem to experience fearful experiences at the meso-systemic level at schools where peers and teachers bully them.

High socio-economic status children show fear regarding the exosystem as hijacking, burglaries, and kidnapping were voiced by children. Children also seem to be left alone by parents as they are too busy at their businesses, which makes them afraid. What was surprising was that low socio-economic groups were also faced with break-ins and fear of being left alone because parents worked in distant places. There seemed to be a higher level of domestic violence than the low SES groups were exposed to, creating fear and insecurities among the children.

6.4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF EXISTING LITERATURE

In contemplation of validating the themes and sub-themes, which are the findings of this study, the section begins by comparing the existing literature to the empirical research findings (see Table 6-1 on the next page). Furthermore, Table 6-2 displays the review of existing knowledge that is not similar to the results of the empirical research. Thereafter, I present the results of the empirical research where the literature is silent (see Table 6-3). Lastly, I provide new knowledge from my findings in Table 6-4.

Supportive evidence within the existing literature

Table 0-1: Comparing existing literature to results of the research

Theme 1: Young children's perceptions of fearful experiences Subtheme 1.1: Microsystem		
Author and year	**Existing knowledge**	**Interpretive discussion**
Hornbuckle (2010)	If young children's need for love, safety, and security is not fulfilled at home, they tend to develop the idea that they have no security, which may create fear.	P1 living in a low socio-economic background, found it difficult to spend quality time with her children due to work demands. This was reported by the P1 (parent of Dorah). Dorah was left alone in the house during heavy rain and thunderstorms, with a lack of parental care and protection that resulted in fearful emotions. Similarly, Unice (L5G9M) from middle SES also reported being left alone to watch TV without parental care. However, Bongani (L11B8H) from high SES was also left alone to watch TV without parental control. The horror movies they watched on television influenced fear in them.
Jenney and Alaggia (2018)	The parents who experience violence in the home are unable to provide quality parenting to the children, and they show a decrease in parental warmth and caring. They have trouble protecting and providing emotional support to young children and consequently cause fear.	In this study, Morapedi and Sele, who live in low socio-economic status, reported that they witnessed violence in the home environment and experienced a lack of love and protection that influenced fear in them. P2 living in a low

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		socio-economic status, indicated that her daughter (Morapedi) felt that he was abusive and did not love her.
Sub-theme 2: Mesosystem		
White (2016:30)	Teachers who lack warmth and support are less likely to form close teacher-child relationships with young children and are more likely to influence fear in young children because children feel comfortable interacting with teachers who are kind, patient and supportive.	In this study, Matshwene from a middle-income school experienced fear and lack of support from a teacher who was shouting at them with an angry face. Matshwene felt that the teacher was unkind and unsupportive. Matshwene experienced a lack of warmth from the teacher. As a result, Matshwene felt terrified by the teacher's angry face and shouting at him in the classroom. T1 from low socio-economic status indicated that the learners were scared when she spoke with a loud noise.
Govender (2013)	Aggressive peers may initiate fights and encourage the victimisation of physically weak children by provoking and upsetting them physically, verbally, and emotionally, leading to increased fear in them.	Sele living in low socio-economic status witnessed physical bullying in the classroom. Oarabilwe living in the middle-income class, experienced verbal and emotional bullying by peers, which caused a high level of fearfulness emotion. T1, living in low socio-economic status, reported that bullying in school is a major concern. The researcher noticed that bullying is a common problem in low and middle-income schools.

Sub-theme 3: Exosystem		
Ralli et al. (2020)	Financial instability exposes parents to distress and may lead to conflict and violence between parents and consequently exposing young children to experiencing more stress, violence, and fear.	P2 living in low socio-economic status reported that he was unemployed, struggled financially, and argued and fought with his wife. Morapedi and Sele, living in low socio-economic status, witnessed parental violence in the home environment. They felt a lack of care and protection. They experienced a high level of fear due to parental violence.
Heinrich (2014)	Parents with low socio-economic status often work longer hours and find it difficult to supervise their children. They work extended hours and experience stress and low salary, and they find difficulties in having a positive parent-child relationship. The job stress that parents bring home can reduce their parenting skills, minimising love, warmth, and sense of security, and thereby introduce stress and fear into children's lives.	In this study, P1 living in a low socio-economic status, reported that she left home early in the morning, returned late at night, and did not spend quality time with the children. P3 living in low socio-economic status reported that she was not always aware of the places her child was playing during the day. P3 revealed that her child, Sele, was playing far and she could spend two-three hours without seeing her, especially during weekends. The researcher believes that the children living in the low socio-economic status had the freedom to play in the streets. The researcher noted that parents of low socio-economic status did not prioritise supervising their children, as they were more concerned about making a living to survive.

| Hartinger-Saunders et al. (2012) | South African children are exposed to different forms of violence in their daily lives, in which they become direct/indirect victims or hear about events of violence or witness violent acts happening to others. | In this study, Oratilwe and Bongani, from high socio-economic status, reported that they were scared of kidnapping, hijacking, and shootings. One would think that children from high socio-economic status did not experience fear of shooting and kidnapping because they are always locked and kept in a safe environment. However, the study revealed that they did not feel safe walking in the streets as they anticipated that danger might strike at any time. T3 also acknowledged that young children from high socio-economic status were scared of abduction in their community. T3 mentioned that young children from high socio-economic status witness a lot of bad things, including murder, violence, break-ins, and hijacking in the community that influenced fear in them. The researcher believes that young children living in high socio-economic status considered their community unsafe. |

Theme 2: Young children's solutions/voices regarding fearful situations

Sub-theme 1: Low socio-economic status

| Author and year | Existing knowledge | Interpretive discussion |

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Gdalyahu et al. (2012)	Children often flee in an attempt to produce the greatest possible distance between the person and the threatening object, to get outside the proximity of danger.	In this study, Morapedi and Themba, from the low socio-economic status, reported that they distanced themselves from threatening situations. Morapedi and Themba, living in a low socio-economic class, indicated that they maintained a distance from dangerous situations.
Le Doux (2014:2871)	When children are terrified, they may protect themselves with their arms or hide behind a door	Dorah, from low socio-economic status, reported that she hid with the blankets on the bed during heavy rain and thunderstorms. She explained that she was left alone in the house and the rain and thunders began. She indicated that the house was flooded. She felt terrified and unprotected. She mentioned that she was very scared of the rain and thunderstorm.
Sub-theme 2: Middle socio-economic status		
Hunt and Shahryar (2011:372)	Children normally attempt to escape when faced with fearful situations. Children maintain a distance from dangerous situations.	In this study, Unice indicated that she jumped out of the window and went to the babysitter's house. Unice was left alone in the house with no adult supervision. Then she felt scared while watching television and went to the babysitter's house to protect herself. Bohlale, in the middle-income class, mentioned that he ran away when he was scared of a black shadow outside the house.

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Rubin et al. (2015)	Peer relationships play a big and significant role in developing socio-emotional skills, and present young children with the opportunities to interact and socialise with peers, thus providing a good opportunity to adapt to their environment.	In this study, Matshwene, from the middle-income class, indicated that he had spoken to his friends about his fears. Matshwene revealed that he felt better when he spoke to his peers. His friends supported him and provided comfort.

Sub-theme 3: High socio-economic status

Hunt and Shahryar (2011:372)	Children normally attempt to escape when faced with a fearful situation.	Tumishang, from high socio-economic status, reported that she was scared of the nightmare while sleeping in her bedroom. Then she ran to her parents' bedroom. Bongani, from high socio-economic status, also reported that he ran away when he was scared of the spiders.

Theme 3: Teachers' voices regarding fear among learners

Sub-theme 1: Low socio-economic status

Author and year	Existing knowledge	Interpretive discussion
Zhang and Nurmi (2012)	A warm and safe classroom environment with adequate support from a teacher is very effective in reducing young children's fearful emotions.	In this study, T1 from low socio-economic status indicated that she read appropriate storybooks to which the children could relate. They also discussed various ways to address fear in the classroom.
Gagnon et al. (2014)	Young children need to feel safe and protected in the school environment.	T1 discussed different ways in which learners could feel safe and protected. T1 assured the learner of low socio-

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		economic status that she would provide care and protection for them.
White (2016)	Children should be encouraged to talk about their drawings, to express their feelings.	T1 from low socio-economic status asked children to draw pictures that would assist them in expressing their emotions. She would also ask children to talk about their drawings to her.
Sub-theme 2: Middle socio-economic status		
Coplan et al. (2011)	The social support strategy involved encouraging children experiencing fear to play with other children, thereby decreasing loneliness.	T2 from the middle-income class reported that she would get other children to play with the child experiencing fear. T2 indicated that she would ask other children to play with Oarabilwe, who was scared of verbal bullying in school. T2 believed that social support strategy would help Oarabilwe to cope with fearful feelings. T2 thought that when other children play with Oarabilwe, they will help her to interact and adapt to the school environment, thus reducing loneliness.
White (2016)	Young children often feel safe and secure with teachers who display respect, listen to them, talk to them, and make eye contact with them during everyday communication in the classroom.	T2 from the middle-income class also indicated that she would speak individually to the child experiencing fear. T2 believed that one-on-one conversation would allow her to probe and gain more information about things that causes fear in children.

		T2 from middle-income reported that she explained how the fearful situation can be resolved to the children. T2 also assured the children that fear is not always as bad as it seems. The researcher believes that T2 from the middle-income class encouraged the children to be brave and face their fears.
Beato et al. (2017)	Children should be encouraged to talk about their drawings.	T2 from the middle-income class used drawings to enable children to express their fears and explain the pictures in the drawing that influenced fear very well.
Sub-theme 3: High socio-economic status		
Kalutskaya et al. (2015)	Teachers should establish a welcoming and safe classroom by interacting with the learners.	T3 from high socio-economic status reported having one-on-one conversations with the children experiencing fear. T3 assured the children that she would always be there to assist them in coping with fear. T3 asked the children in the morning about their feelings.
White (2016)	Children feel comfortable interacting with teachers who are kind, patient, and supportive.	T3, from a high socio-economic status, reported that she was creating a safe learning classroom by showing compassion and helping children to be calmer. During data collection in high socio-economic status, the researcher observed the qualities of T3 that showed that she listened to the children and communicated with the

		children with a calm voice. T3 encouraged the children to participate actively in the lesson and praised them for their involvement. The researcher believes that T3 was kind and caring towards the children in the classroom.

Theme 4: Parents' voices regarding fear among learners

Sub-theme 1: Low-income

Author and year	Existing knowledge	Interpretive discussion
Hiebert-Murphy et al. (2012)	Fear of young children may be reduced when parents show empathy and emotional expression, and support.	P1, P2, and P3 in this study reported that they supported their children by using the reassurance strategy.

Sub-theme 2: Middle socio-economic status

McMurtry, Chambers, McGrath, and Asp (2010).	Parents often reassure the children to relieve fear.	In this study, P5, P6, and P8 from the middle-income class were a source of support by comforting and reassuring their children to cope with fear.

Sub-theme 3: High socio-economic status

McMurtry et al. (2010).	Parents often reassure the children to relieve fear.	P9 and P11 from high socio-economic status reported that they supported the children in coping with fear through cuddling and the reassurance strategy. P9 indicated that

		she would accommodate her daughter (Tumishang) in her bedroom to comfort her.

6.5   THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN LITERATURE AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table 6-2 illustrates the research findings that are contradictory to existing literature.

Table 0-2: Existing literature opposing the research findings

Theme 1: Young children's perceptions of fearful experiences

Subtheme 1.1: Microsystem

Author and year	Existing knowledge	A contradiction of what is known?	Interpretive discussion
Harold et al. (2016)	Young children living in low socio-economic status environments are exposed to violence in the home environment, making it difficult for parents to provide love, protection and support, which means they experience fear.	The children living in the middle socio-economic status were also exposed to domestic violence in the home environment. Although this did not come through in the findings, some children from the high SES were from divorced homes.	When I conducted the study in the middle socio-economic status, one would have expected to see evidence of a conducive family in which children were not exposed to domestic violence. However, from the drawings of Unice and Oarabilwe it was evident that there were no indications of this. On the contrary, it was clear that Unice and Oarabilwe, from middle-income class, were left alone in the home with inadequate care and protection. Unice and Oarabilwe in the middle-income class, witnessed domestic violence that contributed to young children

			feeling unloved, unwanted and fearful. P5 also revealed that her daughter Unice witnessed her father's aggressive behaviour and conflict in the home.
Lunkenheimer et al. (2017)	Parents from disadvantaged economic status are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety due to financial constraints. As a result, they display unresponsiveness, insecure attachment, and low warmth towards their children, thereby influencing avoidant attachment in young children, which means that children experience feelings of fearfulness and insecurities	The study found that parents living in middle socio-economic status also left their children alone in the home.	One would have expected to see evidence of a well-functional family, in which young children are always protected and well taken care of. However, Unice's drawings revealed that she was left alone in the home, which means they experienced limited protection and fearfulness. Parents seem too busy in their careers, businesses, and overseas trips; children are often neglected, hence emotional issues. This was prevalent among the children from the high SES environments as well.
Sub-theme 3: Exosystem			

Author and year	Existing knowledge	A contradiction of what is known?	Interpretive discussion
Heinrich (2014).	The parents living in low socio-economic status work longer hours, and the job stress that parents bring home, can reduce their parenting skills, minimising love, warmth, and a sense of security, thereby introducing stress and fear into children's lives.	On the contrary, this study found that grandparents living in high socio-economic status bring home job stress and ultimately influence fear in young children. Grandparents' behaviour seemed not supportive of love, care and concern.	Taylor living in high socio-economic status, indicated that her grandfather experienced job stress and caused conflict in the home. It shows that the grandfather could not handle the job stress and shouted at everyone in the house. The job stress was limiting the grandfather from providing love, warmth, and support to Taylor. As a result, Taylor experiences high fear and insecurity because she witnessed her grandfather shouting at her granny. Taylor felt unsafe and unprotected. The unpleasant circumstances in the extended family exposed Taylor to fearful emotions. Although Taylor did not live with her extended family, she used to visit them regularly. Her immediate home environment did not influence the fear experienced by Taylor. Similarly, Oratilwe, with high socio-economic status, was scared that she would experience kidnapping while walking down the street with her grandparents. She felt unsafe walking down the streets as she considered the community dangerous, and that danger may strike at any time. The researcher believes that young children of high socio-economic status do not have the freedom of outdoor play in the streets as they fear strangers and kidnappers. T3 also revealed that young children of high socio-economic status are scared of strangers. T3

Author and year	Existing knowledge	A contradiction of what is known?	Interpretive discussion
			reported that the children feel scared when parents/caregivers delay fetching them from school. T3 indicated that the children living in high socio-economic status were scared of being left alone in the school, as they have a fear of abduction.
Ralli et al. (2020)	Low socio-economic status is linked to unemployment, and financial instability, which exposes parents to distress and may lead to conflict and violence between parents, consequently exposing young children to experience more stress, violence and fear.	This study found that parents living in middle socio-economic status also expose young children to stress and violence.	On the contrary, not only P2 and P3 are from low socio-economic status; They experienced intimate violence due to limited finances. However, it was evident from drawings of Oarabilwe and Unice that middle-income class parents also experienced intimate partner violence. P5 living in the middle-income class, indicated that she was experiencing intimate partner violence and conflict.
Theme 2: Young children's solutions/voices regarding fearful situations			
Author and year	**Existing knowledge**	**A contradiction of what is known?**	**Interpretive discussion**
Coplan and Ooi (2013)	Fear presents itself in young children struggling	This study found that young children who	Peers were a great source of help, as young children experiencing fear interacted with their friends to feel better.

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	to come in contact with their peers and the social environment around them.	experienced fear were interacting with their peers to feel better	

Theme 3: Teachers' strategies/voices regarding fear among learners

Sub-theme 3: High socio-economic status

Author and year	Existing knowledge	A contradiction of what is known?	Interpretive discussion
Drake and Winner (2013)	Drawing is considered an effective tool to assist young children in expressing their emotions.	The study found that T3 disagrees that children's drawings are effective tools to enhance the children to express their feeling.	From the teachers' interview, T3 from high socio-economic status indicated that sometimes the children are clever and know why you want them to draw. They draw something meaningless or difficult to learn about their feelings. The teacher explained that a girl would draw people with all the private parts clearly shown. Then the girl was spoken to about drawing the same picture repeatedly as if she was taught how to do so.

6.6   SILENCES IN THE DATA COMPARED TO THE LITERATURE

Table 6-3 illustrates silences in the data mentioned in the literature.

Table 0-3: Silences in the data, which were mentioned in the literature.

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Author	Trend	Interpretive discussion
Nyborg et al. (2022)	There is currently an increased need of competent teachers who can provide quality education, including the well-being of young children.	The reactions of all children from three different schools located in three various socio-economic status was evident that they had never given the opportunity to draw situations/events that made them scared. The children had not previously done such an activity in their classrooms. Their educators did not use drawings in the classroom to understand the children's feeling about the personal experiences and things that are causing fear in them. I had to explain more than once about the activity, and I also walked around and checked if they were doing it correctly. The majority of the children enjoyed the activity and were eager to narrate their drawings and personal experiences of the things that are causing fear in them.

Fear interferes with the health and well-being of young children, affecting the socio-emotional development of young children and making it difficult for them to adapt in their environment.

It was clear that the educators did not understand the children's fears and the effect it has on the learners' ability to learn effectively in the classroom.

In addition to dealing with social problems, teachers should be able to support children with traumatic experiences such as bullying, family conflict, and violence that are causing the fear. |

		The data showed that young children are exposed to numerous traumatic experiences in the home, school and community that influence fear in them. Therefore, teachers and parents need to play a huge role in supporting children to cope with fear. There was certainly a need for in-service or pre-service teachers training to assist the children who face fearful experiences.

6.7   NEW INSIGHT THAT EMERGED FROM THE DATA

My primary goal in this study was to focus on the eco-systemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children. This is one of the few studies using children's voices to express their fearful experiences against the ecological systems of Bronfenbrenner's theory. Besides, my study highlights the differences in the levels of Bronfenbrenner's theory in accordance with the 3 different socio economic status groups that is prevalent in the diverse South African community. This study used the case studies of grade three learners' voices through drawings and included their parents' and teachers' voices to obtain a deeper knowledge of the factors causing fear in young children. Due to the rationale of the study focussing on the diverse socio-economic status (SES) groups in South Africa, the multiple case studies were schools situated in the high, middle, and low SES groups.

The grade three children willing to share their unique and personal experiences through drawings were highlighted. The participating grade three children in this study enjoyed the drawing activities and narrated their experiences and viewpoints about the things that scared them. The drawing and narrating about their unique experiences of fearful emotions were activities they had not done before. Still, they were very eager to tell the complete details about their pictures. The children talked immensely about what was happening in the pictures and what made them scared in the drawings. They were very comfortable and excited while speaking about their drawings. Their responses provided evidence that they were scared of the events/circumstances that were drawn. It was interesting to note the difference in terms of what the parents considered fearful experiences against the actual fearful experiences drawn by the children. Parents were not always aware of the things that influence fearful experiences in their children as they reported different things to what the children drew. This indicated the gap between parents thinking and children's thinking of fearful experiences.

The data showed that young children living in South Africa are exposed to various social and emotional problems that cause fear in their lives. This was exacerbated by the 3 SES macrosystems that children are born into, the important emerging point was that most of the young children's drawings in all SES groups showed that the children lacked attention, support, and protection. The children in this study felt insecure due to the social problems prevailing in South Africa.

The children living in the low socio-economic status experienced fear not only from the immediate environment of their homes but also from the outer environments that contributed

to their fearful feelings. T1 revealed that young children of low socio-economic status are faced with child abuse, gender-based violence, crime, unemployment, and poverty. These children come from a home environment where their parents are unemployed, and they witness domestic violence. The external environments, such as crime and murder in the community, worsen their experience of fear. The parents of the low socio-economic status did not have stable jobs. They sell fruits and vegetables in town to make a living. As a result, they spent more time outside the home to try and make a living. Thus, the children spent most of the time left alone at home. Therefore, young children living in low socio-economic status experience increased fear since they feel unloved, unwanted, and unprotected in their home environment. From this perspective, they struggle to cope with fear, as their home environment does not provide adequate care, a sense of security and belonging, and support to deal with the adversities.

Moreover, the data revealed that young children living in middle-income backgrounds experience the fear of bullying and violence in the community. These children's home environment seems stable, and the family offered care, love, warmth, and support. The children living in middle-income backgrounds received support and protection from the home environment. The fear of these children was caused by bullying in the school and the teacher's attitude. The children were scared of verbal bullying by their peers and the teacher, who seemed to have a negative attitude.

Furthermore, the teacher of the middle-income background revealed that young children were scared of illnesses and death. The community factors such as the coronavirus and the loss of employment contributed to young children's experiences of fear. T2 commented: *'People are scared of catching the virus. People have lost jobs due to coronavirus and have financial issues.'* Indirect factors outside the home environment caused the fear of young children from middle-income backgrounds.

The young children from high socio-economic status experienced fear caused by factors outside of their home environments, such as kidnapping, strangers, and abduction in the community. The home environment (the inner circle) of these young children seems stable, offering greater love, care, and a sense of security. The care and support offered to children at home enabling them to develop self-confidence and courage to adapt to the environment. At home, the parents/caregivers interact responsively, spending quality time with the family and building a trusting relationship with the children. These children were offered all possible

protection through engaging the extended family. The extended family played a significant role in providing love and support to these children. However, it seems that grandparents sometimes impose their insecurities into the homes, thus creating chaos and unhappiness among these children. Moreover, when young children witness external factors (outside of the home environment) such as kidnapping, housebreaking, violence, and murder happening in the community, they become filled with fear in them.

The figures 6.1; 6.2 1nd 6.3 below illustrate the unique contributions of this study according to the multiple case studies used. These are colour-coded (using the colours of the traffic lights, red signifying danger, yellow –mediocre danger and green to show all good to go) to show the differences among the ecological layers according to Bronfenbrenner's model. Looking at the low SES group, most of the layers in their circle are red. Bullying from peers and teachers seems to be the danger red layer in the middle socio-economic status. The other circles are yellow. The higher income environment shows primarily orange and green layers as these children and parents' support is much more. They have medical aids that would afford them the privilege of therapists when they are fearful and thus will be able to heal and become less fearless.

This highlights that the equality between the different socio-economic groups is still very prevalent although our South African democracy is 28 years old. The gap between the haves and have-nots seems to be widening rather than becoming closer. My study has contributed to the reality that support systems such as social care from the Department of Social Development; police services (SAPS) and the psychologists/ therapists from Department of Health have not invested adequate attention to the lower socio-economic groups. This has contributed to the literature on the theoretical understanding of childhood as a structural category and shows the widened gap in the constitutional rights of equality, social justice, and the need to redress the results of the past discriminatory laws and practices. This is evident from the participants as described in Chapter 4.

Figure 6.1: Low-income class

- No peace in the informal settlement
- They fight in the street and children can see
- People living in the informal settlement normally fight when they are drunk
- Some fight for their husband when they are cheating
- Murder, crime, gangsterism, alcohol and drug abuse are the problem

The lack of collaboration between education department and department of social development

Parents' voices
- I'm unemployed and struggle financially

Teacher's voices
- Assure learners of their safety and protection.
- Tell stories that I think they can relate to, in order to address fear

Parents' voices
- I'm often not around at home
- I don't spend too much time with them
- There is too much conflict at home
- We fight a lot with her mother
- She is scared when I am fighting with his father

Children's voices
- I'm left alone at home
- I don't have anyone to talk to
- I actually feel hurt

Chronosystem
Macrosystem
Exosystem
Mesosystem
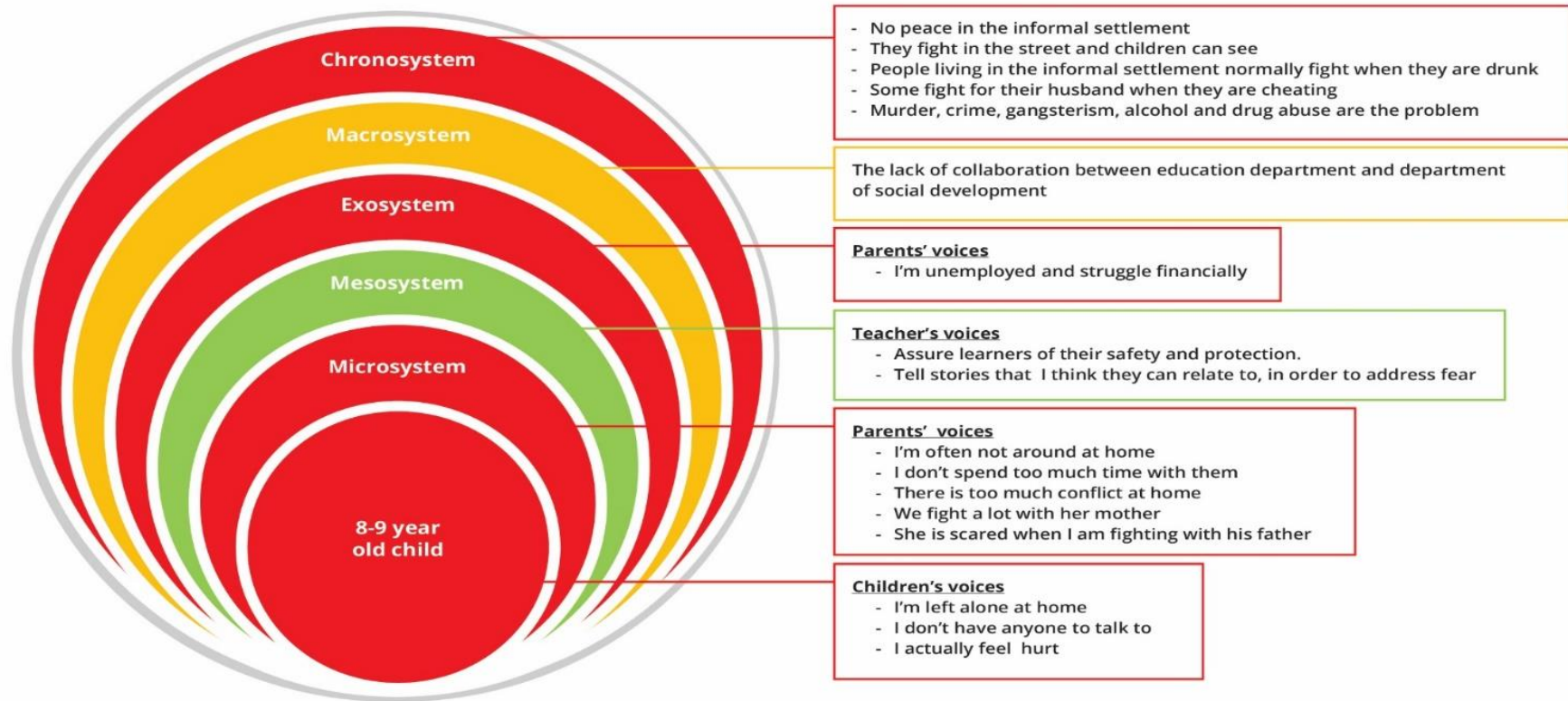Microsystem
8-9 year old child

Figure 0-1: Low-income levels
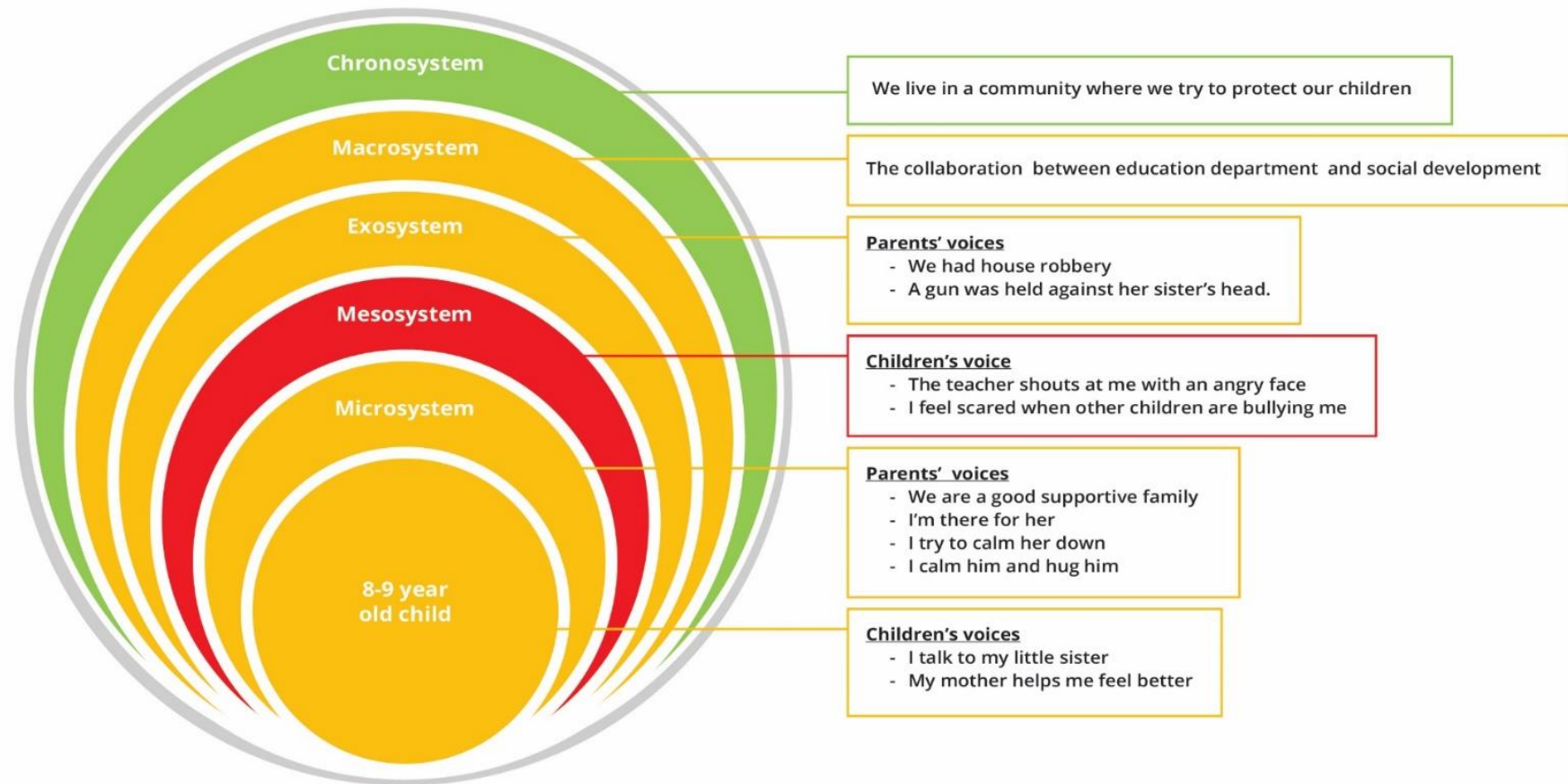
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Figure 6.2: Middle-income class

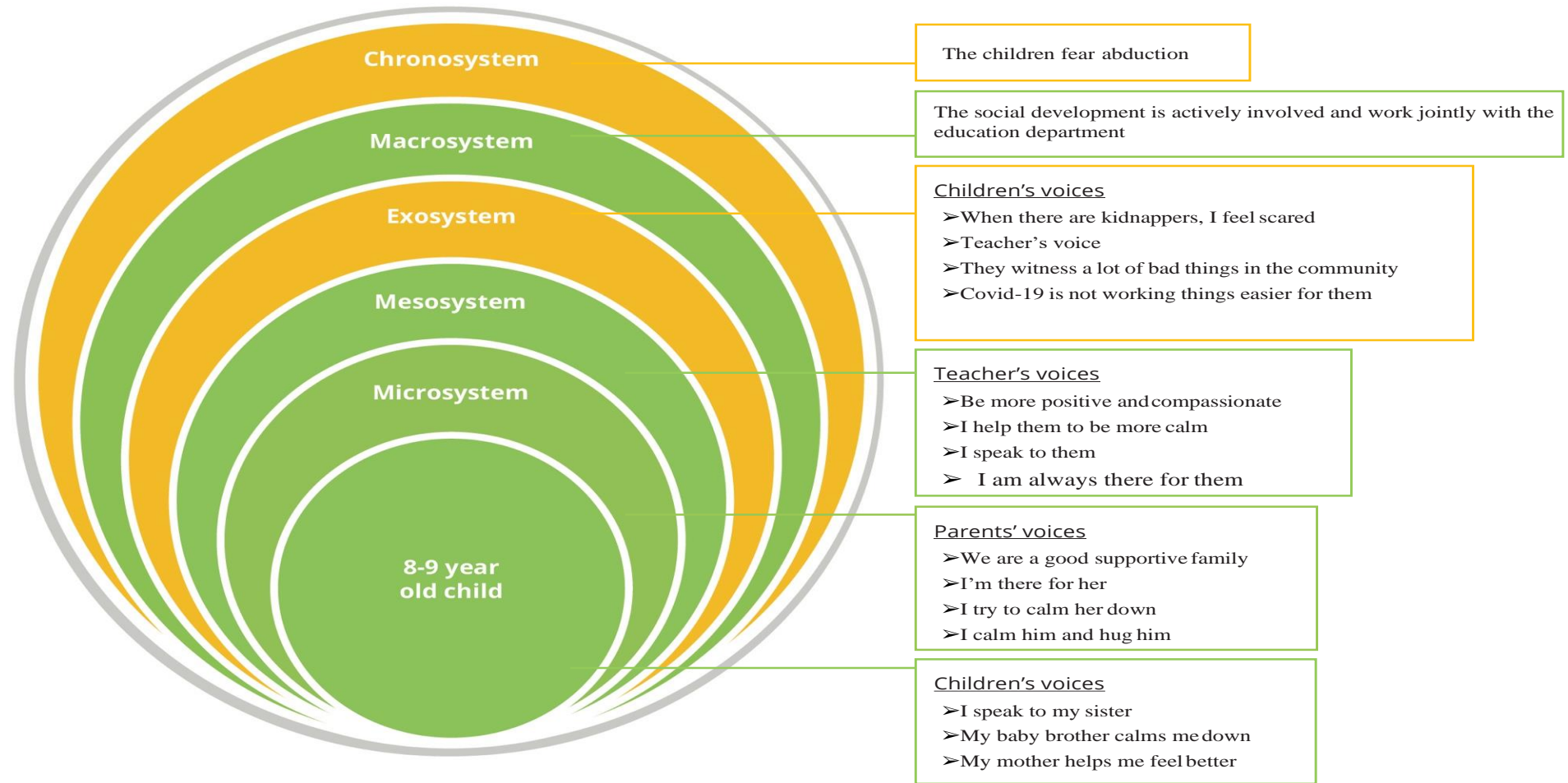Figure 0-2: Middle-income levels

Figure 6.3: High-income levels

Figure 0-3: High-income levels

The 3 diagrams above show the differences clearly regarding more danger zones in the low SES societies compared to more green zones in the high SES societies.

6.8 RESPONSE TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My desire to undertake this project was motivated by my curiosity about how the eco-systemic factors cause fear in young children. Specifically, I wanted to explore solutions to the research questions to contribute my empirical research findings to the existing knowledge concerning the fear of young children. Since there is a dearth of research in relation to the factors causing fear in young children, it was important to provide South African children with an opportunity to voice out their perceptions of the events and circumstances that made them scared. It was important to listen to the personal experiences of the grade three learners in searching for their perceptions of fear. In the chapter's last section, the researcher provides a conclusion by answering the primary and secondary research questions. An explanation of future research recommendations and the study's limitations is given. By examining the factors influencing fearful experiences among children (microsystem), the support provided by the other layers in Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework also highlighted the inequality of the support systems offered to children.

6.8.1 Sub-question 1: What is the understanding of fearful experiences among young children?

Steyn and Moen (2019) consider the South African context in which young children grow up as a risk society that exposes them to social ills such as unemployment, poverty, high crime rate, violence, divorce, and child-headed households. Research shows that more than 15 million children in South Africa live under circumstances that expose them to poverty (Perou, Visser, Scott, Beckwith, Howard & Danielson, 2013). Williams, Manez Costa, Sutherland, Celliers and Scheffran (2019) agree with Perou et al. (2019) and postulate that young children exposed to poverty often live in informal settlements and unsafe housing without proper sanitation and clean running water. Gould and Ward (2015) postulate that young children from poverty-stricken households find themselves in situations with limited financial resources, including food, education, and healthcare services. Moreover, Statistics South Africa (2021) indicates that the unemployment rate is almost 34.4%, illustrating that approximately 12 million people are without jobs.

Additionally, approximately 46% of the adult population in this country live below the poverty line, with nearly 25% of households experiencing food insecurity (Stats South Africa, 2021). Furthermore, 9 million children receive one nutritious meal once a day in schools supplied by the South African government, which illustrates clearly that everyone in every five children in

South Africa suffers from starvation and undernutrition (Stats South Africa, 2021). Sandstrom and Huerta (2013:4) argue that for "young children to develop to their full potential, they need safe and stable housing, adequate and nutritious food, access to medical care, secure relationships with adult caregivers, nurturing and responsive parenting, and high-quality learning opportunities at home, in childcare settings and in school".

Young children living in low socio-economic status experience high levels of fear as their parents are presented with financial struggles, which leads to anxiety, depression, and stress. As parents from low socio-economic status struggle to provide financially for their children, they experience chronic stress that makes it difficult for them to give their children the care and attention they need (Sandstrom & Huerta, 2013). In this way, children from poor neighbourhoods are more likely to experience emotional insecurities and fear (Mills & Amick, 2010).

In the same vein, financial instability exposes parents to distress and may lead to parental conflict (Ralli et al., 2020). Furthermore, Capaldi et al. (2012) agree and maintain that parental exposure to unemployment and lack of finances may result in a lack of satisfaction in the relationship and, ultimately, one partner pulling out of the relationship, which may consequently damage the inter-parental relationship. Divorcing parents experience increased stress and continued conflict, wherein young children are often trapped (Moen, 2021). The increasing number of divorced parents leaves young children with concern "about who will provide care and protection if one or both parents abandon them" (Çetinkaya & Erçin, 2015:91). In so doing, Çetinkaya and Erçin (2015) young children believe that the one parent that moved out of marriage is lost eternally. They will never reach out to them, and consequently, they experience fear of neglect. Moreover, divorce exposes parents to high levels of anxiety, depression, and stress to the extent that they cannot show care and protection to their children (Fagan, 2013). Thus, divorced parents can influence intense feelings of fear and insecurity in young children.

Divorced parents experience an increased amount of stress and continued conflict. South African children witness 68% to 80% of domestic assaults (Edwards, 2019). Parents who are victims of violence spend a significant amount of time striving to survive violence to the extent that they struggle to provide for the emotional needs of young children, which manifests in inadequate care and protection and low warmth towards their children. Abused parents are

less likely to provide care and protection to their children, which influences insecurities and lack of trust in young children; as a result, they experience fear of neglect and harm.

Besides, the crime level in South Africa is alarming, with housebreaking being the most common crime encountered by households (Burge et al., 2012). An estimated 1.2 million individuals experienced housebreaking in 2019-2020, affecting 891 000 households. On the other hand, home robbery stands at 169 000 incidents, affecting 139 000 households (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Moreover, the incidents of personal property theft were calculated at 1.1 million occurrences (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Although Darling-Churchill and Lippman (2016) argue that young children need a safe and secure environment to fully develop their potential, the above circumstance leaves them with intense feelings of fear and insecurity. In this regard, young children in South Africa live in unsafe and insecure environments with limited privacy exposing them to community violence that leads to experiences of intense and constant feelings of fear. Therefore, "repeated exposure to community violence contributes to problems forming positive and trusting relationships necessary for children to explore their environment and develop a secure sense of self" (Guerra & Dierkhising, 2011:2). Moreover, "difficulties forming these attachment relationships can interfere with the development of a basic sense of trust in young children" (Guerra & Dierkhising, 2011:2).

When the children were asked to make a drawing of: 'What makes you scared?' Most of their drawings depicted all of the above-mentioned social problems. I found that the grade three children were very eager to provide their unique and personal experiences of the things that made them scared. The cases reported from three various socio-economic statuses in this study offered rich evidence regarding the root causes of fearfulness in young children. The young children living in low socio-economic status revealed that their fear was influenced by violence, negligence, and bullying. In contrast, the fear of the young children living in middle socio-economic status was influenced by the teacher's negative attitude and bullying from peers. The young children living in the high socio-economic status were scared of kidnapping and murder in their context.

In view of the above, it is clear that the environment in which South African children grow up is detrimental to their development and influences their experience of fear and insecurities.

6.8.2 Sub-question 2: How do teachers address the experiences of fear in learners?

The teachers in this study responded positively regarding the support they provided to the children. They read the stories to the children and discussed various ways to help them cope with fear. The children could relate to their emotions by reading stories and finding ways to address the fearful feelings. This was done to give the learners the knowledge and understanding of the best possible ways of coping with fears. The children articulated their fearful experiences verbally and artistically. The teachers can use play/drama and puppets to talk about fears. The teachers in this study believed that the drawings help the children communicate their feelings because they might not have words to express them verbally. The teacher revealed that drawings could show the fearful experiences of young children and the severity of the fear. By asking the grade three learners to talk about their drawings, the teachers better understood the children's feelings. White (2016) reckons that drawings and dramatisation serve as a significant mechanism to help children to voice out the problems of their emotional well-being.

Moreover, the teachers reported using flipped classrooms with all the learners. This was done to increase the participation and involvement of all learners, including learners experiencing fear. Since young learners experiencing fear often lack involvement in the classroom due to their quietness and shyness, the flipped classroom strategy was considered effective in maximising the participation of all learners. In this way, young learners experiencing fear would benefit from flipped classroom strategy, as the teacher should create a warm and welcoming learning environment that encourages all learners to explore. Bosacki et al. (2014) also agree that teachers must adapt their teaching strategies to suit the needs of young children experiencing fear in the classroom. This includes using social support strategies in supporting young children experiencing fear, which involves structuring the classroom activities to increase participation, and encouraging children experiencing fear to play with other children, thereby decreasing loneliness (Coplan et al., 2011).

The same authors believe that teachers use social support strategies, including verbal encouragement, expression of warm approval, and positive reinforcement, enable young children to cope with fear (Coplan et al., 2011). Using social support strategies by encouraging children experiencing fear to work collaboratively with classmates and praising them for appropriate behaviour assists young children in coping with fear, as this strategy enhances social skills and problem-solving skills. Teachers in this study reported that they

asked other children to play with the learner who experienced fearful feelings. This was done to reduce fear and help young children develop socio-emotional skills that would assist them in feeling safe in the school environment. Bosacki et al. (2014) reiterate that social support strategy should provide socio-emotional support to young children experiencing fear. This suggests that teachers must create a warm and safe classroom environment and build a strong relationship with young learners experiencing fear. The teachers listened to the children and allowed them to talk about what they were feeling.

The teachers believed one-on-one talks with each child would encourage them to open up and provide detailed information. Speaking calmly and gently was a way in which the teachers showed compassion and care for the young children. In so doing, the teachers were trying to be positive and to show the children that they were present in their lives and always willing to support them. In this way, the teachers could build a trusting relationship with the children, giving them comfort and reassurance. The reassurance and comfort helped children feel safe and secure in the classroom. Creating a warm and welcoming classroom environment enables learners to participate in learning activities and improve academic performance. The teachers also reported that they discussed different strategies in which learners could feel safe and protected. Thus, teachers should know that they are the catalyst in the change of a better life for children.

6.8.3   Sub-question 3: How do parents address the experiences of fear among young children?

Parents play a significant role in assisting young children in coping with fear and insecurities. Young children experiencing fear need supportive parents to encourage them to face their difficulties, thereby assisting them to reduce insecurities and develop independence to explore and utilise the environment to its fullest capacity (Beato et al., 2017). Researchers such as Gagnon et al. (2014) have shown that supportive and responsive parents are positively linked with more adaptive childhood coping strategies and low levels of fear in young children. In this way, responsive and supportive parents encourage young children to develop skills to cope with fear and increase the child's ability to adapt to the environment.

The parents/caregivers in this study considered young children's fearful experiences and validated the child's feelings. They made the children aware that their fearful feelings were taken seriously and that it was a normal part of their development. They spent an increased amount of time comforting and encouraging the children to talk about their fearful feelings.

Since most children were scared during darkness and bedtime, the parents gave them adequate care and attention to calm them down. The parents habitually used songs and dolls to comfort and make their children feel secure. They assured the children that they would protect them and ensure their safety was prioritised.

Moreover, the parents read the stories to the children to provide them with knowledge and understanding of coping with fear. This was done to assist young children in learning about various things that cause fear and gain knowledge about things that young children could do to feel better. The parents believed that when children knew how things worked and what they could expect, it would help them feel secure. Reading stories could benefit young children to learn about heavy rain and thunders, and parents could help them understand that it is normal to experience fearful feelings during thunderstorms.

As young children were also terrified of watching violent actions on media, parents could reduce the amount of time and exposure to television programmes. Watching age-appropriate television programmes, such as cartoons, would make young children feel secure. The parents in this study indicated that they allowed their children two to three hours to watch television programmes such as cartoons. The middle and high-socio-economic status parents revealed that they watch television with their children. The researcher believes that when parents watch television with their children, it allows them to guide the children on the appropriate television programmes suitable for young children and comfort them should the television content become terrifying. This would also give the parents quality time to spend with their children and spread love and enjoyment. The more time parents spend with their children, the more opportunity to communicate and build a close and trusting relationship with them.

Surprisingly parents from low-income groups found the money to buy chocolates and sweets to calm their children down and show them some love through extrinsic means. The researcher believes that parents wanted to eliminate their children's fear and make them happy by giving them money to purchase chocolates and sweets. The researcher believes the parents wanted to distract their children from experiencing fearful emotions. As mentioned before, parents of low socio-economic status do not spend quality time with their children. They give their children money to buy sweets and chocolate because they feel guilty for not giving them adequate attention.

6.8.4 Sub-question 4: What do young children believe to be the solutions to fearful experiences?

The children in this study mentioned that they escaped the fearful situation by running and hiding themselves. They responded to a particularly frightening circumstance by avoiding and distancing themselves from danger. In other words, they considered the situation or circumstance as dangerous and threatening to their well-being. Thus, they were trying to keep themselves in a safe place. The young children perceived the situation as unsafe and fearful (e.g., in the case of domestic violence) and were aware that harm might strike at any time. Therefore, they run away to protect themselves. They viewed the environment as a dangerous place and were motivated to take protective actions to survive. L11B8H, from high socio-economic status, also reported that he ran away when he was scared of the spikes. L5G9M, from the middle socio-economic status, revealed that she jumped out of the window to seek assistance from the babysitter. This study confirms the findings that "young children often flee, to attempt to produce the greatest possible distance between the person and the threatening object, to get outside the proximity of danger" (Gdalyahu et al., 2012:132).

It was interesting to note that L12G9H, from high socio-economic status, indicated that when she was scared, she called the police officers for assistance. She believed that the police officer would make her feel better. These findings indicated that there is a need for the strong involvement of the police officer in protecting young children from fearful experiences. The findings revealed that assistance from the police services would help them feel safe and protected.

On the other hand L8B8M reported that when he was scared, he scratched himself. Furthermore, L2G8L mentioned she went to her bedroom and cried when she felt scared. Whereas L6G8M indicated that when she was scared, she spoke to the flower. L7B9M reported that he spoke to his friends when he felt fearful. L10G9H indicated that when she was scared, she told her parents. Similarly, L9G9H, from high socio-economic status, reported that she was scared of the nightmare while sleeping in her bedroom. Then she quickly ran to her parents' bedroom. Her parents accommodated her into their bed. They cuddle and comfort her to feel better. The siblings also played a significant role in calming and comforting young children experiencing fear. L10G9H mentioned that when she was scared, she needed to speak to her sister to feel better.

Moreover, parents believed that using the reassurance strategy would comfort and make the children feel better. P5, P9, P10, and P11 believed that re-assurance was a good strategy to reduce the level of fearfulness in young children. Listening and communicating to young children about their feelings contribute to positive development and self-image. Parents spend time comforting and communicating with young children, build a strong relationship, and their children trust them to care for and protect them. When children have a strong relationship with parents/caregivers, this helps to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. When young children feel accepted and protected by parents/caregivers, they can become motivated to cope with negative feelings such as fear. The love, warmth, and support lay the foundation for a sense of security in young children. Respecting and validating young children's feelings, help them.

On the other hand, the teachers believed that young children experiencing fear need to speak to their peers. When young children experience fear, speak, and play with their peers, this helps them to feel better. The teachers believe that peers can help young children experiencing fear develop social skills and adjust to the environment. In this way, young children experiencing fear can interact and collaborate with their peers. In this regard, young children experiencing fear participate more in social activities and decrease social withdrawal and loneliness. Peers play an essential role in comforting and calming down young children experiencing fear. Thus, the teachers encouraged young children to actively engage in play activities with peers to gain socio-emotional skills and to deal with fear effectively.

6.8.5 Primary research question: How do eco-systemic factors influence the experience of fear in young children?

This study explored the eco-systemic factors influencing fear in young children from three different socio-economic backgrounds in Pretoria: low socio-economic status, middle socio-economic, and high socio-economic status. The study discovered that young children living in low socio-economic backgrounds experienced greater fear than middle and high socio-economic statuses. It was discovered that parents from low socio-economic backgrounds did not have a stable job and struggled financially. These parents spent more time trying to make a living by selling fruits and vegetables. As a result, they left their children alone in the house with no adult supervision. The children's drawings depicted loneliness and lack of care, with no adult protection. In this regard, the children felt fearful and insecure.

Moreover, the study uncovered that financial struggle exposed parents to high emotional distress, which influenced conflict and violence between parents. This financial struggle interfered with parents' emotional stability, as they were easily irritable and experienced inter-parental conflict and violence. Thus, the children witnessed parents shouting and fighting each other, leaving them feeling unloved and unwanted, thereby experiencing high fear and insecurities. These children experienced a lack of attention and emotional support, which left them feeling insecure and unprotected. This implies that young children from low socio-economic backgrounds were exposed to limited love, warmth, and support in their home environment. These findings confirmed that parents/caregivers did not create a positive home environment in which young children felt protected, secure, and had a sense of belonging. In other words, the fear of young children living in a low socio-economic background was influenced mainly by their home environment. However, the teachers seemed loving, caring, and supportive towards the children. My study extends to the knowledge Bronfenbrenner (2006) described that young children from unsupportive home environments may receive love, warmth, and attention from a caring teacher who can provide a sense of acceptance and security. In this regard, the teachers had a positive relationship with the children, making them feel loved and protected.

On the other hand, the middle and high socio-economic class children seemed to have a stable home environment where they received love, warmth, and emotional support. However, exposure to media in the home environment, particularly television, contributed to fear in young children. The children from middle and high socio-economic status stated that horror movies were causing fear in them. This is because young children can produce very clear, powerful, detailed images, and descriptions of horror movies they saw on television in their minds and believe that it might happen to them. Thus, they experience feelings of fear (Cantor et al., 2012). These findings suggest that parents need to control the television programmes that their children are watching.

Moreover, the fear of middle-income children was influenced by the school environment. The study discovered that these children experienced verbal bullying in school, which influenced the experience of fear. Young children spend a great amount of time interacting with peers at school. Young children with a lack of social skills often experienced peer rejection, which means they were lonely and quiet. Therefore, the bullies took advantage to victimise them. The researcher believes that the bullies took advantage of these children since they could

not engage in social interactions and play games with other peers, and then they abused them verbally and emotionally.

On another note, the community factors also exposed middle- and high-socio-economic status children to fearful experiences through witnessing violence and kidnapping. These children indicated that they were scared of kidnapping. Young children from middle and high socio-economic status never felt safe and protected playing in their community without their parents/caregivers, as they were aware that danger might strike anytime without warning. Instead of experiencing a childhood filled with love, happiness, and security, they were consistently on the alert to protect themselves against community violence and murder. The educators also confirmed that the children felt unsafe and unprotected because of the violence taking place in the community. In this way, the fear of these children was influenced mainly by outer/external factors.

From this perspective, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological theory confirmed that factors that young children had direct and indirect interactions had the potential to cause fear.

Figure 6.4, my main contribution of my study, shows a combination of the fearful experiences and support offered by the layers in the child's situation. Clearly, there was inequality of support systems amidst the different SES environments. My research findings and analysis favour the child from a higher socio-economic-status environment. Therefore, the question is how we support all children equally. What is the role of the DBE and community involvement? They say, 'It takes a village to raise a child'. However, when the village is impoverished, one wonders if the child has a chance to overcome fear and anxiety and perform effectively in school.

MIDDLE-INCOME CLASS

LOW-INCOME CLASS

HIGH-INCOME CLASS

Chronosystem

Macrosystem

Exosystem

Mesosystem

Microsystem

8-9 year
Old child

Figure 0-4: Combination of the fearful experiences and inequality of the support systems provided to children.

Figure 6-4 clearly shows that efforts for equality over the last 28 years have hardly resulted in a change in our South African society. It also highlights the mesosystem in the middle SES, which is red. The very same mesosystem in the high and low SESs is green. This would also perhaps mean that schools in the middle-income suburbs are very competitive and thus, the amount of bullying and teachers being very strict in the middle class are the result of the red mesosystem in the middle SES society. The red danger signs in the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and chronosystems among the low SES society highlight the lack of support regarding the development and experiences that these children face. Due to the fearful surroundings that they face having to struggle against all odds, there is no support from the community, the nurses, the police, social workers and the chronosystem, which dooms these young children to a life of hardship. This needs to be highlighted to

governmental departments as support for these vulnerable children is essential so that they can break the cycle of poverty.

Lastly, the high SES societies are generally greener and streaks of yellow show mediocre dangers. Parents of these children can afford to provide and pay for therapy and added external help to improve classroom performances and emotional well-being. Their children are very blessed to be born into a high socio-economic society.

The recommendations that I express in Table 6-4 could be the answer for bridging the gap between the different SES societies, thus enabling an equitable and equal society in South Africa. Although the study was about the ecological factors that influenced fearful experiences among eight-and-nine-year-old children, my diagrams above show the gross disadvantages that most of our South African children face towards becoming capable and successful citizens of South Africa.

6.9   STUDY LIMITATIONS

It is important to acknowledge that qualitative study has its strengths and weaknesses, which in this research are presented as challenges and limitations (Creswell, 2014). This study was conducted under strict COVID-19 regulations in the year 2021. Therefore, the parents were hesitant to participate in the project. The researcher only interviewed the parents via telephonic interviews and email as parents had a fear of contracting COVID-19. Therefore, the cost of a telephonic interview must be considered. In addition, getting information through the telephone is much different than just an e-mailed qualitative questionnaire.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the researcher was given limited time to engage with the grade three learners to draw the things that made them scared. The selection of the grade three learners was partially based on convenience, as many parents never gave consent for their children to participate in the study. Moreover, not all the grade three learners in a classroom had the opportunity to participate in the study as they were attending school on a rotation basis. Thus, only half of the grade three learners in the classroom were involved.

Furthermore, the researcher had to leave the interview questions with the teachers to complete during their own time. Since the researcher was part of this research study, there was a possibility that the participants were unintentionally guided to obtain the intended results. However, through member checking, I was able to check on the trustworthiness of the data collected.

6.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.10.1 Recommendations for the curriculum and policy

The findings of this study have proven the significance of using foundation phase learners' drawing skills effectively. The allocated time for the Life Skills subject needs to be adjusted to enable the learners to gain more knowledge on emotional expression. Since young children with fearful emotions are often quiet and speak less, an extended amount of time should be made available in the curriculum to enable learners to express their inner feelings through drawings. Although the foundation phase learners have two hours allocated for art and craft that is not always sufficient in the classroom. Therefore, enough time should be given to learners to express their feelings through drawings. During the Life-skills lesson, the learners should make drawings of their personal experiences in the home and their relationship with peers. The learners can also learn about their safety in the community and learn about different services they can visit to seek help. In the same vein, the school can invite police officers, health nurses, and social workers to come to the school assembly to address learners about the issues in the societies.

It was evident from the empirical data that learners from different schools located in different socio-economic statuses experienced various fears. Therefore, the policy needs to be more practical, and policymakers need to make sure that one size fit all policies are not suitable for the diverse South African community. The policy should also develop action plans and checklists to ensure monitoring and evaluation of these new additions to curriculum and policy support. The DBE would also need to train their officials for the support of teachers and parents who have children that experience these problems.

6.10.2 Recommendations for teacher development and training

Foundation phase teachers need more training to identify and support young children experiencing fearful emotions. As learners perform academically well in a conducive classroom where the teacher is supportive and sensitive, teacher training in this regard would benefit the learners to improve their participation in learning activities. Teacher training should include developing the learners' resilience in coping with fear. In other words, teacher training should include various strategies to help learners work through the problems presented at home or school.

To fully prepare the pre-service teachers to understand their roles and responsibilities in primary schools, teacher-training institutions must join hands and build a solid foundation with the DBE and schools. This joint collaboration would ensure that the content of the Bachelors of Education Degree (BEd) programme prepares pre-service teachers to support and respond to the learning needs of the learners. Pre-service teachers need to be aware of the Life Skills content and knowledge area, including beginning knowledge and personal and social well-being. During the Life Skills subject, teachers need to integrate the topic of safety and different services in the community that can be helpful to young children, including social workers and police officers. This will allow the teachers and pre-service teachers to teach children about services available in the community, such as police officers and social workers. Teachers and pre-service teachers need to be aware of the collaboration between the education department, the department of social development, and police services. The social workers and police officers will address the social problems in the community and help the learners to gain a sense of trust, and safety and feel protected.

The policymakers can make a CD for teachers to show them how to stop aggressive behaviour or assist children in these conflict-ridden backgrounds to heal.

The following table illustrates the training model for teachers (pre-service and in-service) regarding support for learners who experience fear.

Table 0-4: A training model for teachers regarding support for learners who experience fear.

Time/ Subject/ Idea	Some creative suggestions to guide teachers	Activities and responses
Morning routine	Have an emotion board in front of the classroom.	Children touch emojis of how they feel.
Literacy lessons	Read stories about children who have fear. Ask children how they feel about the story ending.	Add a fearful ending and watch the reactions of the children. Add a happy ending and watch the reactions. Get children to end their own stories in a frightening way. Get children to end their stories with a happy ending.
Life skills lessons	Get children to draw, act, or dance a situation that makes them fearful. Get the same children to draw, act, or dance a situation that helped them heal.	When the children are seated, ask them to explain their dances, acts or drawings. Let them discuss in their little groups what they feel. Why do they feel the way they feel? Teachers should use school psychologists or social workers as guests when they do these activities.
Parental engagements	Teachers invite two or three parents to school and ask them to share their positive experiences, although they lived a life of struggle.	Let children discuss what they feel about the stories. Why do they feel hope in the midst of distress and unemployment, etc?
Invite religious organisations to the classrooms/ assemblies	Teachers help the children to sing the songs of hope. Teachers instil morals and values in children.	Teachers ask the children to share what they have learnt from the religious organisations.
Invite police services to explain protective ideas to children.	Teachers help children to memorise toll-free numbers such as 10111.	Let the children discuss different strategies to keep them safe and protected.
Teachers are catalysts for change	Allow teachers to meet monthly to discuss problems in their schools and the creative ways that they have dealt with these problems.	

6.10.3 Recommendations for foundation teachers

Teachers must create a warm and safe classroom environment in which all learners feel secure. Building a close and trusting teacher-child relationship that consists of warmth, comfort, support, and caring would also benefit young learners experiencing fear in the classroom. It is significant for teachers to fulfil pastoral roles that involve taking into consideration the effect of social problems on the intellectual and emotional development of young children. Teachers as pastoral care should focus on helping the learners to discuss problems they are facing in their home, school/community and to provide knowledge and support to cope and develop resilience. Teachers are responsible for communicating and engaging with the family/parents, identifying challenges in the home environment that may contribute to learning problems, and providing psychosocial support. This can be done through teachers inviting two or three parents to school and asking them to share their positive experiences although they struggled.

Teachers need to be aware that they are very important in shaping the future of young children. Therefore, they need to ensure the holistic development of all children. In this regard, teachers need to be aware that their responsibilities go beyond teaching and learning to include young children's personal, social, and emotional well-being relating to community issues. The involvement of the religious leader and police officers in the school assembly would also assist children in gaining hope and knowledge of the various ways to them safe and protected.

Teachers should encourage learner participation through cooperative learning groups and peer learning. Adopting this strategy would assist learners experiencing fear to participate in learning activities and improve academic performance. It is also recommended that teachers should engage learners in outdoor learning activities to increase the participation of young learners experiencing fear.

Some children struggle to express themselves in words. However, when teachers give them more opportunities to draw and discuss their drawings, young children may find it fascinating and feel more relaxed and be able to express themselves with passion. Thus, teachers need to integrate drawings into teaching and learning to allow children to express themselves in a relaxed manner. The teachers need to use the Life Skills subject effectively to get the children to act or dance a situation that makes them fearful and act or dance a situation that helps them heal. Moreover, during literacy lessons, teachers can read stories about children who

have fear. Then teachers can ask children how they feel about the story ending and watch the children's reactions. Teachers should use school psychologists or social workers as guests when they do these activities.

6.10.4 Recommendation for parents

6.10.4.1 Recommendation 1: Parents information session

Parents should be equipped with the knowledge that would assist them in identifying the signs of fear in young children. The school could provide an information session for parents to gain understanding in identifying and supporting young children experiencing fear. In this way, parents would learn the different strategies to assist the child to cope with fear and minimise events and circumstances that would expose young children to fear. Additional information could be provided to parents using a website and support groups.

6.10.4.2 Recommendation 2: Parent-child relationship

Teachers should educate parents about the different emotions of young children. Teachers should also make the parents aware that young children express fear differently. Parents should support their children by creating an open relationship with their children to enable the young children to talk about things that are causing fear in them. Parents need to listen, respect, and accept their children's feelings, as this would assist in building a trusting relationship with young children. Parents must comfort and reassure the children of their safety. Parents must show love, care, and emotional support to allow their children to feel safe and protected. They need to involve children in decision-making and encourage them to take responsibility, as this would enable young children to develop self-confidence and independence.

Parents may also read the storybooks and sing songs to help the child cope with fearful situations. Breathing techniques could also assist the child in feeling better. An easily understanding three-tip sheet and posters can also guide parents to support their children in coping with fear.

Making teachers agents of change and providing them with information to share with parents. Get parents more engaged with school activities so that children can feel secure. Teachers should ensure that they have good harmonious relationships with parents regarding their children. The importance of working together to support children is an important aspect in developing children to heal from the anxiety created by fear.

6.10.5 Recommendations for future research

The findings of this study revealed that teachers, parents, siblings, and peers play a huge role in supporting young children to cope with fear through social interactions. Therefore, in future, the findings of this study can be investigated further through a qualitative approach focusing on the following:

- Strategies to enhance the self-efficacy of young children to cope with fear
- The role of culture in causing fear in young children
- Effect of social media in influencing young children's experiences of fear
- Biological influences of fear, whether young children can inherit fearfulness from their mothers
- The effect of COVID-19 in causing fear in young children; and
- The challenges of teachers in dealing with young children experiencing fear in the classroom.
- Enhancing the support systems of disadvantaged learners to ensure a successful future.
- Parent- teacher educational sessions in low socioeconomic climates to increase good study and wellbeing habits.

6.11 CONCLUSION

The intentions of the study were to explore the eco-systemic factors influencing fearful experiences among young children, investigate the strategies teachers and parents implemented to support young children experiencing fear, and determine solutions that young children used to deal with fearful situations. Teachers and parents need to be knowledgeable about different factors, such as an unconducive home environment and community violence and bullying that are causing fear in young children. This will allow parents and teachers to provide them with the necessary support that would enable the children to comfortably express their feelings and not to withdraw and isolate themselves when confronted with difficult situations they cannot control.

The findings of this empirical research enabled me to understand the causes of fear in young children. It was valuable to gain more insight into how fear could negatively affect young children's well-being and deprive them of the opportunity to adjust to the environment.

Through this research study, it was significant to gain the perspectives and personal experiences and viewpoints of the teachers and parents, but most importantly the young children's views of their understanding and solutions to fearful situations. It was interesting to note that drawings were a way young children felt safe expressing their inner feelings. The drawings played a big role in helping the young children to communicate their fearful experiences.

This study would contribute to the existing knowledge of young learners, and advanced research should be directed at building resilience in young children so they can cope with fear. This study would also enhance the lives of younger children in all the different SES climates of   young children in ECD centres and primary schools. In this way, the study would benefit stakeholders in learning how fear is understood and what different strategies learners of various age groups implement. Teachers would also realise that they are catalysts in the change of children's lives if they are presented with tip sheets for parents. When teachers, communities, and parents work together as a partnership, children feel safer, thus improving their well-being and academic performance. Therefore, there is a need for strong collaboration between teachers, police officers, social workers, professional health workers and church leaders to assist young children in coping with fears. Government departments working to enhance social, health and education benefits of children need to join forces and provide a strong exosystem to ensure that children become successful citizens and add to the economy of South Africa.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	13 January 2021
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2021– 30 September 2021 2021/01
Name of Researcher:	Masola F
Address of Researcher:	3172 Mayokoyokwani Street
	Gem Valley x2
	Mahube
Telephone Number:	012 4205668/079 7105456
Email address:	Masola.francinah95@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Ecosystemic factors influencing young children's experiences of fear
Type of qualification	PhD
Number and type of schools:	3 Primary Schools
Districts/HO	Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

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

13/01/2021

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

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

APPENDIX B: LETTER FROM TSHWANE DISTRICT PRIMARY SCHOOLS

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department:Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: Lucy Sepati
Tel:(012) 401 5817
Fax:0868 522 388
Email: Lucy.Sepati@gauteng.gov.za

TO: The Principal
TS District Secondary Schools

FROM: Mrs. Hilda Kekana
District Director: Tshwane South

DATE: 22nd February 2021

SUBJECT : PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT AN
EDUCATION INSTITUTION

Dear Sir/ Madam

Permission is hereby granted to **F. Masola** to conduct an academic research at your institution.

The researcher shall make arrangements for research with the school management. The school staff, learners and SGB are requested to co-operate with and give support to the researcher. Research findings and recommendations are critical for policy review in public education sector.

The researcher may however not disrupt the normal school programme in the course of research. The research may only take place between the months of February and September. Attached are other conditions to be observed by the researcher.

The school may request for the research outcome presentation directly from the researcher or obtain research document from Research & Knowledge Management Directorate at GDE Head Office.

Regards

Mrs H.E. Kekana
District Director: Tshwane South
Date: 2021 /02 /23

Making education a societal priority

Office of the District Director: Tshwane South
(Mamelodi/Eersterust/Pretoria East/Pretoria South/Silverton/Centurion)
President Towers building, 265 Pretorius Street, Pretoria, 0002
Private Bag X198, Pretoria, 0001 Tel: (012) 401 6317; Fax: (012) 401 6317
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear Principal

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL

I am a student studying at the University of Pretoria. I am currently studying towards Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Education. I hereby wish to apply for permission to conduct research in 2021 at your school. My research project will involve Grade 3 learners, teachers as well as their parents. My research topic is: "Ecosystemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children". The main aim of the research project is to explore and identify factors that influence fear in young children.

I would like to conduct this research project because of the observation that, most South African children live under conditions that they are unable to control, such as family violence, divorce, parental loss, childhood illness and deprivation of food and shelter, that may cause them to experience a high level of fear and insecurity. Young children have a need to feel safe and secure in their environment. If this need is not fulfilled at home, in school and within society, children tend to develop the idea that they have no security which may create feelings of fearfulness. Young children need to be educated about emotions, in which they will learn to appreciate the emotional aspect of being human and be taught that it is normal to have varied feelings.

In view of the information provided above, I am asking for permission to see children in person as they will be drawing the pictures of the events and circumstances that contribute to their experiences of fearfulness. I will conduct interviews with Grade 3 teachers and parents in person but if COVID-19 is still an issue by the time I collect data, I might need to conduct online interviews with Grade 3 teachers and parents. A copy of the interview schedule is attached for your information.

Parents will be given an informed consent letter and children will be given an assent letter to inform them about the research project. Participation will be voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. All the information gathered will be treated as confidential and the anonymity of participants as well as that of the school will be maintained.

The research results will be made available on request after the completion of the project. The research data will be stored both in electronic format and as a hard copy

at the University of Pretoria for 15 years in compliance with the ethical requirements of the University. Results may also be shared with other professionals in articles or conference presentations and all persons who will have access to the research data will be identified.

It is my presumption that the research finding will make a creditable contribution towards assisting teachers and parents/caregivers with guidelines/recommendations in handling children experiencing fear.

If you allow your school to participate in this research, please fill in the consent form provided below. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

Yours sincerely

Francinah Masola (Researcher)

Cell number: 0797105456

E-mail : masola.francinah95@gmail.com

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT: PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

I, _____, Principal of _____ agree / do not agree (delete what is not applicable) to allow Francinah Masola to conduct research at my school. The topic of the research is: Ecosystemic factors influencing fearful experiences among young children.

I understand that the researcher will see the Grade 3 learners in person to collect data. I am aware that teachers and parents from learners in the foundation phase will be interviewed via zoom meeting or in person about this topic for approximately 45-50 minutes at a venue and time that will suit the parents. The interviews will be audio taped.

I understand that the researcher subscribes to the principles of:

Voluntary participation which implies that participants may withdraw at any time.

Informed consent whereby participants must at all times be fully informed about the research process.

Safety in participation.

Confidentiality and anonymity of human respondents.

Trust.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

APPENDIX D: LETTER TO GRADE 3 TEACHERS

Dear Teacher

I am a PhD student at the University of Pretoria. I need to conduct a research project in partial fulfilment of the requirements of this degree programme. My research topic is: "Ecosystemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children". The main aim of the research project is to explore and identify factors that influence fear in young children.

I would like to conduct this research project because of the observation that, many South African children live under conditions that they are unable to control, such as family violence, divorce, parental loss, childhood illness and deprivation of food and shelter, that may cause them to experience high level of fear and insecurity. Young children have a need to feel safe and secured in their environment. If this need is not fulfilled at home, in school and within the society, children tend to develop the idea that they have no security which may create feelings of fearfulness. Young children need to be educated about emotions, in which they will learn to appreciate the emotional aspect of being human and be taught that it is normal to have varied feelings.

In view of the information provided above, you are requested to participate in this research study. The participation that is requested from you as a teacher involves responding to a set of questions that you will be asked in an interview, which will be recorded. In order to observe the current COVID-19 regulations, interviews will be conducted via zoom meeting or in person. The interview will last for about 45-50 minutes.

The research project will have no direct benefit to you, but your input will contribute to the identification of factors influencing the experiences of fear in young children. I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

The following ethical principles will be observed during the research project and the researcher carries full responsibility to ensure that ethical standards are adhered to at all times:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without any negative consequences and the data would be destroyed should you withdraw.

All enquiries that participants might have will be addressed to ensure that they are fully informed of all aspects of the research project to enable them to give informed consent in participating in the study.

All information will be treated with the strictest confidence and your personal particulars and identity will not be divulged to any person.

The research results will be made available on request after the completion of the project. The research data will be stored both in electronic format and as a hard copy at the University of Pretoria for 15 years in compliance with the ethical requirements of the University. Results may also be shared with other professionals in articles or conference presentations and all persons who will have access to the research data will be identified.

I do hope that this letter will provide you with adequate information to enable you to consider giving your consent to participate in the proposed study. In order to grant your consent to participate in this study, you are requested to sign the Reply slips accompanying the Informed Consent Letter, one for giving consent to participate in the research project and the other to give consent to have the proceedings of the interview audio taped. Kindly let me know when you have made your decision with regard to your participation in the research project, so that I can collect the Reply Slips.

Kind regards

_____

Francinah Masola (Researcher)

Cell number: 0797105456

E-mail : masola.francinah95@gmail.com

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

INFORMED CONSENT: REPLY SLIP

I…………………………… hereby give /do not give consent of participation in the abovementioned research project. I understand that I can withdraw at any stage of the research project and that my identity will not be disclosed.

Signature: Participant ………………………. Date: ……………………………

APPENDIX E: CONSENT LETTER TO THE PARENT/CAREGIVER

Dear parent

I am studying PhD at the University of Pretoria. I need to conduct a research project in partial fulfillment of the requirements of this degree programme. My research topic is: "Ecosystemic factors influencing the experience of fear in young children".

This research project is based on the view that, most South African children live under circumstances that they are unable to control, such as family violence, divorce, parental loss, childhood illness and deprivation of food and shelter, that makes them to experience fear and insecurity.

In view of the above, I therefore request permission to involve your child to participate in this study. Your child will be asked to draw pictures of the events and circumstances that contribute to their experiences of fearfulness. Moreover, your child will be asked to respond to a set of interview questions which will be recorded.

The following ethical principles will be observed during the research project and the researcher carries full responsibility to ensure that ethical standards are adhered to at all times:

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without any negative consequences and the data would be destroyed should you withdraw.

All enquiries that participants might have will be addressed to ensure that they are fully informed of all aspects of the research project to enable them to give informed consent in participating in the study.

All information will be treated with the strictest confidence and your personal particulars and identity will not be divulged to any person.

The research results will be made available on request after the completion of the project. The research data will be stored both in electronic format and as a hard copy at the University of Pretoria for 15 years in compliance with the ethical requirements of the University. Results may also be shared with other professionals in articles or conference presentations and all persons who will have access to the research data will be identified.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University

of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

I do hope that this letter will provide you with adequate information to enable you to consider giving your child a consent to participate in the proposed study. In order to grant your child consent to participate in this study, you are requested to sign the Reply slips accompanying the Consent Letter, one for giving your child a consent to participate in the research project and the other to give your child consent to have the proceedings of the interview to be recorded.

Kind regards

_____

Francinah Masola (Researcher)

Cell number: 0797105456

E-mail : masola.francinah95@gmail.com

PERMISSION TO ALLOW MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT: PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

CONSENT LETTER: REPLY SLIP

I,……………………………………………parent   of…………………………………………in Grade 3…..gives (permission / not permission) that my child may participate in the research project and that the results may be published.

I understand that my child can withdraw at any stage of the research project and that my his/her identity will not be disclosed.

Parent's signature: ………………………… Date: ………………………

PERMISSION TO ALLOW MY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

CONSENT LETTER: REPLY SLIP

I,……………………………………………parent   of…………………………………………in Grade 3…..gives (permission / not permission) that my child may participate in the interview questions which will be recorded. I understand that the researcher needs to listen to the audio clip at a later stage so that the interview can be transcribed for the analysis of the data obtained from the interview session.

I understand that my child can withdraw at any stage of the research project and that my his/her identity will not be disclosed.

Parent's signature: ………………………… Date: ……………………

APPENDIX F: ASSENT LETTER TO GRADE 3 LEARNERS

Dear Participant

I am a PhD student registered at the University of Pretoria and I invite you to participate in my research project. Your parent has already given permission that you can talk to me. My study is about children like you who are feeling scared in some situations. If you give me permission, I would like to ask you to draw the picture of the things that scare you. I would also like you to answer a few questions to find out from you about what exactly makes you feel scared and what was happening.

If you don't mind, I want to record our conversation, otherwise I am going to forget all the interesting things you will be telling me. I would also like to ask you to allow me to show the drawings to your teacher. I promise not to tell anybody except your teacher, about our conversation, and it will only stay between the two of us. I also promise not to mention your name, so that nobody would know that you told me certain things. If you feel that you don't want to talk to me anymore, you are welcome to tell me, and I won't ask you anymore questions.

I also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

I really will appreciate it if you could help me with this study.

Francinah Masola

If you want to take part in this study, you can choose the smiling face, if not, choose the angry face.

APPENDIX G: PARENTS SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Interview questions for parents P1 (Dorah Mothapo, LOW SES)

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of five. We live in the in a small shark.

2. How would you describe your family….?

My children and I live together with their father.

3. How many people are you in your family?

We are 5, Myself, My husband and 3 children

4. Do you all live together? Yes

5. Do you work?

No, I'm not working, only my husband is a vendor…….selling vegetables in town

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home?

I ask my neighbours to keep an eye.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

Yes, I often leave them to town to assist my husband to sell the vegetables, because that is the only source of income we have. If I don't assist my husband…….uhm…..we will not have enough money to buy food and clothing. She is old, she can stay in the house with her two siblings. She can feed the youngest sibling. I tell her that they should watch television in the house when she is tired of playing.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

She is used to that life………she know that I'm often not around at home. She knows how to take care of her siblings.

9. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I hug her and speak to her

10. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared?

I speak with her and give her money to buy some chocolate

11. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings?

Umh……I am not sure whether she knows how to control her feelings. I don't spend too much time with them during the day, because Im helping their father in town. We leave the house early in the morning and we come back late at night, sometimes we find them sleeping. I don't really get the opportunity to see what is happening during the day.

12. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home or in the community?

Yes, people living in the informal settlement normally fight when they are drunk. Some fight for their husband when they are cheating. The community also fight when they see thieves stealing.

13. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

We don't fight at home, but I sometimes have an argument with their father. You know……..I sometime suspect text messages on his phone……….You know I sometimes think he is cheating on me, and we shout at each other.

14. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

She likes watching tv, she spend too much time watching tv, but she also likes playing with friends

15. Which TV programmes does your child watch?

Cartoons, Im not with them during the day. Sometimes they watch Nigerian movies with me

16. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No

17. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes, on Sundays when we don't go to town to sell vegetables, we watch Nigerian movies.

18. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

She enjoy playing on the streets with her friends. Sometimes they go far and I don't see them for long hours. She has many friends.

19. How does your child feel about playing with other children? She love playing with friends, but sometimes she get bullied.

20. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation? She normally hold my hand and be next to me

21. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar situation? Yes

Interview questions for P2- fear of parents fighting, Low SES

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of four. We live in a small shack with my wife, and 2 children, but the first one is my stepdaughter. I'm trying hard to provide for my family even when I'm unemployed. We are struggling financially, but we don't want the children to notice that. When they tell me there is no grocery in the house, I need to see to it that they have something to eat.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

Umh…..you know every relationship has its own problems. I sometimes fight with her mother…….you know when I am unemployed and struggle financially, I become easily angered when my wife talk me, I start fighting with my wife…….and Morapedi can notice that we are not happy. She thinks that I'm abusing her mother…..you know. We try not to show the children that we were fighting each other, but she can notice that we are not happy in the house.

3. How many people are you in your family?

Just the four us.

4. Do you all live together? Yes…...

5. Do you work? No, I don't have a job, only my wife is working.

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? Since, Im not working, I spend too much time at time looking after them because my wife is at work. My wife leave the house early in the morning….you know. I dress the child before she goes to school and ensure that I prepare her things. I take care of them, when she come back from school. I stay with them in the house and let them watch television.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

If I get an emergency call, I leave them in the house alone, and tell them to watch television.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

She is comfortable with her little brother in the house.

9. What makes him/her scared?

She is scared when I am fighting with her mother. I am her stepfather, and I have noticed that she is very sensitive, short tempered and does not feel well when I reprimand her. She knows that I'm her step father, and when I reprimand her, she feels that I don't love her. The other day, after shouting with her mother, she was very scared and she would normally keep quite and sit alone on the bed, and start crying. She isolated herself and did not talk to anyone.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I speak to her very nicely. I tell her that I love her very much. I think she misunderstand the situation and think that I am abusing her mother. Then I buy her some loli pops to calm her down.

11. How do you help your child when she is scares? Please explain.

I speak to her, and buy her favourite snack to make her feel better

12. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home or in the community? Please elaborate.

Yes, we fight a lot with her mother. Although, we don't want her to see us fighting. She can notice that her mother and I don't get along.

13. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

umh…you know……there is no peace in the informal settlement, she often see

the community fighting the criminals. They fight in the street and children can see them. Murder, crime, drugs and alcohol abuse are the problems.

14. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

Yes, my wife and I often shout each other. Sometimes she see us.

15. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

She enjoy watching television, so she watch for two to three hours

16. Which TV programmes does your child watch?

cartoons.

17. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No, she doesn't seem to be fearful

18. Do you watch TV with your child?

Yes, but myself, I often watch the news with them.

19. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

She love playing with other children. She enjoy playing on the streets with her friends. Sometimes they go far and I don't see them for long hours.

20. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

She enjoy playing.

21. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation? She is quiet and shy.

22. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar situation? Yes, she is trying not to show her emotions, but I can notice if she is uncomfortable.

Interview questions for P3 Sele- Low SES

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of three.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

My fiancé is not supportive. You know……when your fiance is cheating he hardly come back home, and he's never supportive. When he comes back home…..he is always on the phone and he never give us time, then we start fighting.

3. How many people are you in your family?

Just the three of us.

4. Do you all live together? Yes…...

5. Do you work? No, I am selling in the street. My fiance is working in construction.

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? When I'm not home, I ask my mother in law to look after her.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

No, I don't leave her alone. My in-laws normally look after her.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

She is comfortable with her granny and her aunt.

9. What makes him/her scared? She is scared when I am fighting with his father. She is also scared of bullying. Sometimes, she doesn't want to go to school because of bullying.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I tell her to stop crying and fight back her peers who are bullying her.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

I went to school many times and reported bullying to the teacher. But ahhh, it

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stop for a while, and they start bullying again. There is nothing I can do, because I can't sit with her in the class. She will grow up and fight for herself.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Yes, she can control her emotions. But she is shy in some places that she is not familiar with.

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home or in the community? Please elaborate.

Yes, we fight a lot with her father because she is cheating. She is seeing us when we fight because it normally happen at night.

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

Ah…you know……there is no peace in the informal settlement, the people there fight a lot. They fight in the street and children can see them because they are playing in the street.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

Yes, there is too much conflict at home. I shout with his father many times.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

She love watching tv, so don't stop her from watching tv. You know…..we don't have any form of entertainment except tv. So I just leave her to watch.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch?

I don't know, but sometimes cartoons.

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No,

19. Do you watch TV with your child?

Yes, I do. I have my favourite television show, and he sometimes watch with me.

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

She has got a very good relationship with her friends and they enjoy playing far from home all day.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

She has many friends…you know. They play well together and I don't like bothering her when she is playing. I don't always know where and who she is playing with. I leave a child to enjoy playing with his friends.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation? She can be shy sometimes.

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar situation? Yes, she can be brave and not tell me.

Interview questions for P4 (Themba)- Low SES

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of five. Mother, father and three children.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

We are a peaceful and supportive family. My husband and I helping each other to

raise children together.

3. How many people are you in your family?

A family of five.

4. Do you all live together? Yes…...

5. Do you work? Yes, I am a full-time domestic worker. My husband is not working

full-time.

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? My husband or two older

children look after him.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

Yes, I often leave him with his two brothers. He does not have a problem with

that.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

He is fine with that. He doesn't have a problem when I leave him with his father or

his brothers.

9. What makes him/her scared? He is scared of spiders, frogs and snakes.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I sit next to him and speak with him. I tell him that in life there are so many things

that will scare him. I tell him that when he grow up, he will still experience many

fearful situations, and he must find a way to cope with them even when I am not

around to help him.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

There is no way I can help him with his fears, because he will still experience

many things that will scare him in his life. I say to him, that is how life is. I tell him

that he must find a way deal with his fears.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

No, not yet.

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home

or in the community? Please elaborate.

Yes, in the community that we live in, they fight often. When he see them fighting

in the street, he run to the house and hide himself.

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young

children?

He does not like people who are fighting. He is scared of people fighting in the

community.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

Yes, sometimes there is conflict between me and his father. But we don't want to

involve them.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

He watch television for an hour after school. Then he go to play in the street.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch?

Cartoons.

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No,

19. Do you watch TV with your child?

Yes, I do. Sometimes.

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

Sometimes his friends bully him. Then he does not want to play with them anymore.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

He enjoy playing with his friends in the streets. But if they bully him, he does not

want to play with them.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation? He tell me if he is not

comfortable.

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar

situation? No .

Interview questions for parents P5 (Unice, Middle class)

1. Tell me about your family

I am The 3 rd child of 4 children. I have 2 girls. I am divorced, and live with my

parents.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

Yes a good supportive family. In bad times they are there but not invasive.

3. How many people are you in your family?

In my household we are 5 myself, my 2 girls and my mum and dad.

My 2 parents with their 4 kids and 11 grandkids.

4. Do you all live together? Yes

5. Do you work? Yes

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? A family friend or Granny.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

No and no

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

She is ok.

9. What makes him/her scared?

Nothing really, the dark gogasens.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

If it is nothing to be scared of , I tell her, but if it is serious I try to calm her

down.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

Hold her reassure her I'm there for her.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Some times

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home or in the community? Please elaborate.

Yes. Last year we had a house robbery were a gun was held against her sister's head.

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

No, we live in a community where we try to protect our children.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

Yes General conflict. Disagreements.

I removed her form more aggressive conflict – Divorcing her Father.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

When she has a chance about 10 hr a week.

17. Which TV programmers does your child watch?

Children TV programmes

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No

19. Do you watch TV with your child?

Yes, I do

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

Umica is sometimes very bossy so sometimes there is conflict but they sort it out

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

Love playing with others.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation?

Withdraws. Stands back.

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar

situation?

In situations that are more serious no, however in just unfamiliar situation she

adjust to it quickly.

Interview questions for parents (P6) Ore Middle-income class

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of 4.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

Yes we are trying to support each other.

3. How many people are you in your family?

Only 4.

4. Do you all live together? Yes

5. Do you work? No, only my husband is working.

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? I look after her, because I am

not working.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

No, if I have things to do like shopping, I make sure that I do it before they come

back from school.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

I do not live my children alone.

9. What makes him/her scared?

Spiders, snakes and horror movies.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I hold, hug and calm the child down.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

I comfort her, and tell her that there is nothing that can happen to her. I protect her.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Yes, she is open with me. She tell me she if she is scared..

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home or in the community? Please elaborate.

No, we live in a quiet place.

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

Nothing.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

No violence at home.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

2-3 hours.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch? cartoons

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

Sometimes, when she is watching the movies with her dad.

19. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

She can play well with other children. She like friends and enjoy playing.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

She is happy to play with other children.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation?

She is acting normal

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar situation? Yes, she can .

Interview questions for parents (P7) Matshwene Middle-income class

1. Tell me about your family

We are a Christian family. We believe in God.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

Yes, we try hard to be supportive. We encourage our children to help each other.

3. How many people are you in your family?

We are a family of 5, mother, father and 3 children.

4. Do you all live together? Yes, we live together.

5. Do you work? No I am not working, only my husband is working as a police

officer.

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? Sometimes, his sisters look

after him when im not at home.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

Sometimes, when I go to church services they do not find me at home. They just

play in the streets until I come back to open the house.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

He is fine because he play in the streets with his sisters and other children..

9. What makes him/her scared?

Umh….spiders.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I shout at him and ask him how could he become scared of the spiders at his age. I

yell at him and tell him to stop screaming when he see the spider, ahhh…..he makes

too much noise. He must face his fears

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

I help him to be brave and kill the spider.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Yes, he can.

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home

or in the community? Please elaborate.

No, we live in a safe and peaceful place.

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

The place we are living in does not expose our children to violence.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

No violence in the house.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

2-3 hours.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch? He watch cartoons

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

Nothing make him scared on the cartoons.

19. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes, gospel.

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

He can play well with others. He has many friends and enjoy playing.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

He is happy to play with other children.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation?

He act normal, I didn't see any problem.

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar

situation? Yes, he can .

Interview questions for parents (P8) Bohlale Middle-income class

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of 3.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

Yes.

3. How many people are you in your family?

Only 3.

4. Do you all live together? Yes

5. Do you work? No, only the wife is working.

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? My sister/aunt.

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

No.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

We have not done that before.

9. What makes him/her scared?

Spider, loud noise, snakes, heights.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I tell him to face his fears.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

I tell him to face his fears. I help him to kill the scary thing.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Not yet.

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home

or in the community? Please elaborate.

No

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

No.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

No.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

2-3 hours.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch? cartoons

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No, he is not.

19. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

To be honest we are playing with him.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

He's happy.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation?

He usually speak to us

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar

situation? No .

Interview questions for parents (P9) High-income class

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of four, mother, father and two daughters.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

We are very supportive towards each other. I spend quality time with my children.

3. How many people are you in your family?

We are a family of four and a helper.

4. Do you all live together? Yes, we live together

5. Do you work? Yes, we both working

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? helper

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

No, I leave her with the helper

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

I do not leave my children alone

9. What makes him/her scared?

She is afraid of the darkness and thunders

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I usually accommodate them at my room.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

I do cuddling and being around her.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Yes, they tell me when they are not ohk

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home

or in the community? Please elaborate.

No idea

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

No that I know of…………Maybe television

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

No

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

She watch television for three hours, after that no more television

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch? Cartoons and educational

programmes

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No.

19. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes, sometimes.

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

Umh, she gets along very well and play well with friends

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

She is comfortable and happy with friends

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation?

If it is scary, they may feel scared. But if it is not scary, they act normal

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar

situation? Yes, she can

Interview questions for parents (P10) High-income class

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of 4.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

We are very supportive towards each other.

3. How many people are you in your family?

We are 4, Mother, Father and 2 children

4. Do you all live together? Yes

5. Do you work? Yes, we both working

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? During the day they are at

school, then I knock off early to fetch them

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

No. I never leave them alone. Sometimes, I take them to their granny's house.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

She enjoys it, doesn't have a problem because she's sitting with her sister.

9. What makes him/her scared?

She is afraid of the darkness.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I comfort him and reassure him that there is nothing to be afraid of.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

Sometimes, I read the story that is about the darkness, and explain to her that there

is nothing to be scared of. I assure her that myself and daddy will protect her.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Yes, she can control his feelings.

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home or in the community? Please elaborate.

In the community no. We do not expose them to violence at home

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

Maybe coronavirus from community causes fear.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

No as we do not expose her to conflict.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

Everyday for maximum 3 hours.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch? cartoons

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No as we do not expose her to violence.

19. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

She enjoys playing with them. She even invite them into the house.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

She enjoys playing with others, but she does not like bullying.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation?

She adjust very easily. She is very talkative

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar situation? Yes he is.

Interview questions for parents - High- income parent (P11)

1. Tell me about your family

We are a family of 3.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

We are very supportive towards each other and encourage each other to reach and

follow our goals.

3. How many people are you in your family?

We are 3 Mother, Father and son.

4. Do you all live together? Yes

5. Do you work? Yes

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? His Dad as he works from

home

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

Yes when I have to go to the shops for essentials. Or go into work for a few

Hours. But happens once in a while.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own?

He enjoys it.

9. What makes him/her scared?

The dark.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared?

I reassure him that there is nothing to be afraid of.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How?

I hug him and speak to him to make him forget

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Yes as his very expressive towards others.

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home

or in the community? Please elaborate.

No.

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

We try to keep our children safe. We ensure that the gates are locked and they play

in safe spaces

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain

No as we do not expose him to conflict.

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?)

Everyday for 3 hours.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch? Disney 305

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No as we do not expose him to violence.

19. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

He enjoys playing with them. He is very caring towards them and tends to share

his lunch with them.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

He enjoys playing with others.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation?

He is able to adjust very easily.

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar situation? Yes

he is.

Interview questions for parents (P12) High-income class

1. Tell me about your family

We are a Christian family. We believe in prayer. I pray for my children and tell them

to involve God in everything.

2. How would you describe your family….e.g supportive? Explain

We are a very supportive family. We want the best for our children. We motivate

them to work hard in school to obtain good results. We remind them that they should

ask God for the strength and wisdom to do well in school.

3. How many people are you in your family?

We are a family of four.

4. Do you all live together? Yes, we live together. I don't want my children to be

raised by someone else. I want to do the best for them. I want to try my best to

provide for them

5. Do you work? Yes, we both have permanent Jobs. I am the sales executive and

my wife is an operational manager.

6. Who looks after him/her when you are not home? Her brother

7. Are there times that you leave your child alone? (Does it happen often?)

No, we do not leave her alone in the house. Normally, we leave her with her brother.

If her brother is not there, I would take her to my parents because they stay closer to

my house.

8. How does he/she react when you leave them on their own? We don't leave her

alone

9. What makes him/her scared? She is scared of car accident and kidnappers.

10. How do you react when he/she is scared? I assure her that mom and dad will

protect her. We accommodate her in our bedroom, or I sometimes spend a night

in her bedroom to comfort her and make sure that she feel safe.

11. How do you help him/her when he/she is scared? How? I sit next to her and talk

to her a lot about her fears. Yes, we have a very good parent-child relationship.

She can talk about anything with me. Yes, we have an open communication. For

example, we once been involved in a car accident, then took her to the therapist

to help her cope with life. We try by all means to do the best to our children. I give

her the best medical assistance and best therapist.

12. Does your child know how to regulate their own feelings? Please explain.

Yes, she can control her feelings. Umh, she is very open with me. If she struggle to

sleep, she would normally tell me.

13. Has there ever been incidents where your child has witnessed violence at home

or in the community? Please elaborate. No violence at home and in our

community.

14. What role does the community and family play in causing fear in young children?

We live in a peaceful and quite place. There is no violence in the community.

15. Is your child exposed to conflict at home? Explain. No

16. How often does your child watch TV? (For how long?) 1 to two hours.

17. Which TV programmes does your child watch? He watch cartoons.

18. Does your child appear to be fearful when watching TV? Please explain

No, we try to monitor the television programmes that he watches.

19. Do you watch TV with your child? Yes, sometimes

20. Please tell me about your child's relationship with his/her peers?

She is very selective with friends. She choose who she wants to play with. She also

does not like playing in the streets. Sometimes her friends would call her to play in the streets. Then she would not go. She enjoy playing with the toys, different games on her tablet.

21. How does your child feel about playing with other children?

She is more social. She loves friends. She enjoy playing with her friends. She even ask me to allow her friends to come and visit.

22. How does your child react in unfamiliar situation? She does not have a problem. If she feels uncomfortable, she normally tell me.

23. Is your child able to regulate his/her emotions when faced with unfamiliar situation? Yes, she can.

APPENDIX H: LEARNERS DRAWINGS AND NARRATIVES

L1G9L

Researcher	"Tell me more about your drawing"
L1	*"I drew myself on the bed……uhm…..I'm left alone at home, and is rainy"*
Researcher	"When do you feel scared?"
L1	*"I feel scared when there is heavy rain can damage my house"*
	"I feel scared, when I'm left alone, and is rainy"
Researcher	"What do you do when you are scared?"
L1	*"When I'm scared, I run to my bed"*
Researcher	"What helps you feel better when you are scared?
L1	*"I hide myself with my blankets on the bed"*
Researcher	"Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?
L1	*"No, my mom is not always at home, I don't have anyone to talk to"*

L2G8L
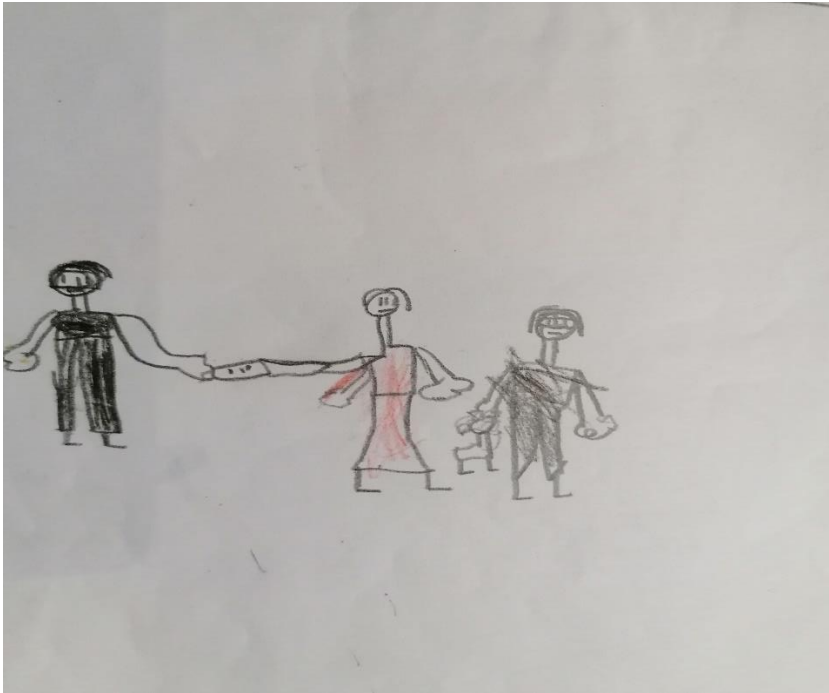
Researcher   "Tell me more about your drawing"

L2   "*I drew my mom and dad fighting*"

Researcher   "When do you feel scared?"

L2   "*I am scared, when I see my mother and father fighting*"

Researcher   "What do you do when you are scared?"

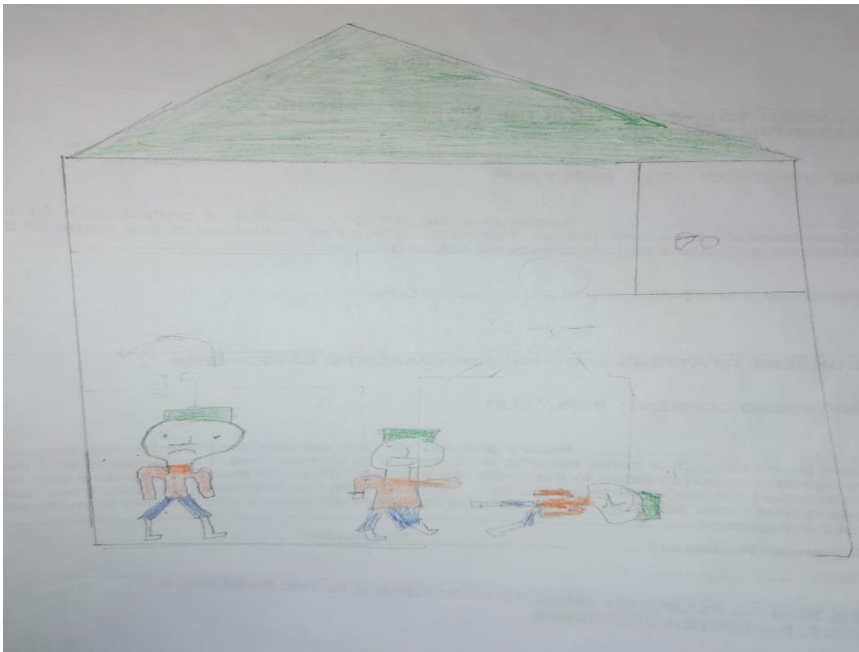**L2**   "When I'm scared, I sit alone on the bed and cry"

Researcher   "What helps you feel better when you are scared?

L2   "*I feel better when I go to my bed and cry*"

Researcher   "Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?

L2   "*Yes, my father buy some sweets for me to feel better*"

L3G9L

|	
Researcher	Tell me more about your drawing
L3	*"I drew the children bullying each other in the classroom"*
Researcher	When do you feel scared?
L3	"*I feel scared when I see other children fighting in the classroom"*.
Researcher	"What do you do when you are scared?"
L3	"*When I am scared, I tell my teacher"*.
Researcher	"What helps you feel better when you are scared?
L3	*"I go away"*
Researcher	"Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?
L3	*"Yes, my teacher"*

L4B9L
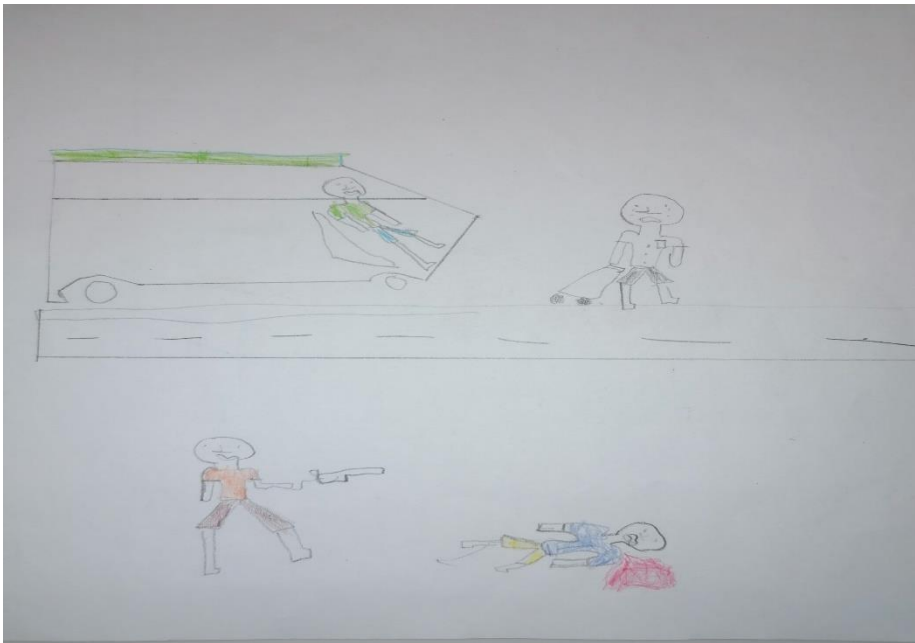
Researcher Tell me more about your drawing

L4 "*I drew myself umh….and I was going to school in the morning and I saw*

a person lying down and was killed by the gunshot".

Researcher When do you feel scared?"

L4 *"I am scared of shooting and murder".*

Researcher What do you do when you are scared?"

L4 *"I run away"*

Researcher What helps you feel better when you are scared?

L4 *"I feel better when I tell my mother"*

Researcher Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?

L4 *"Yes, my mother"*

L5G9M

Researcher   Tell me more about your drawing

L5   "I drew myself feeling scared when I'm left alone at home"

Researcher   When do you feel scared?

L5   "I feel scared during the darkness"

            "I feel scared, when I'm left alone, and there is rain, lighting and thunder"

            "I feel scared, when I see mom and dad fighting"

            "I feel scared, when my cousins make jokes and fun of me"

            "I feel scared, when I see a shack and bird"

            "I feel scared of coronavirus"

            "I feel scared when is quiet and I'm left alone at home"

            "When I am watching horror movies, I feel scared"

            "I am scared of I am scared of the coronavirus"

Researcher   What do you do when you are scared?

L5   "When I'm scared, I jump out of the window and go to the baby sitter"

Researcher   What helps you feel better when you are scared?

L5   "I talk to my little sister"

Researcher   Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?

L5   "My little sister"

L6G8M

Researcher Tell me more about your drawing

L6 *"I drew myself feeling scared when I see my parents fighting. Sometimes*

I feel scared when I am watching television. I feel scared when other

children are bullying me, she said I am ugly"

Researcher When do you feel scared?"

L6 *"I am scared when I see my parents fighting"*

"I am scared when I am watching television"

"I am scared of bullying"

Researcher What do you do when you are scared?"

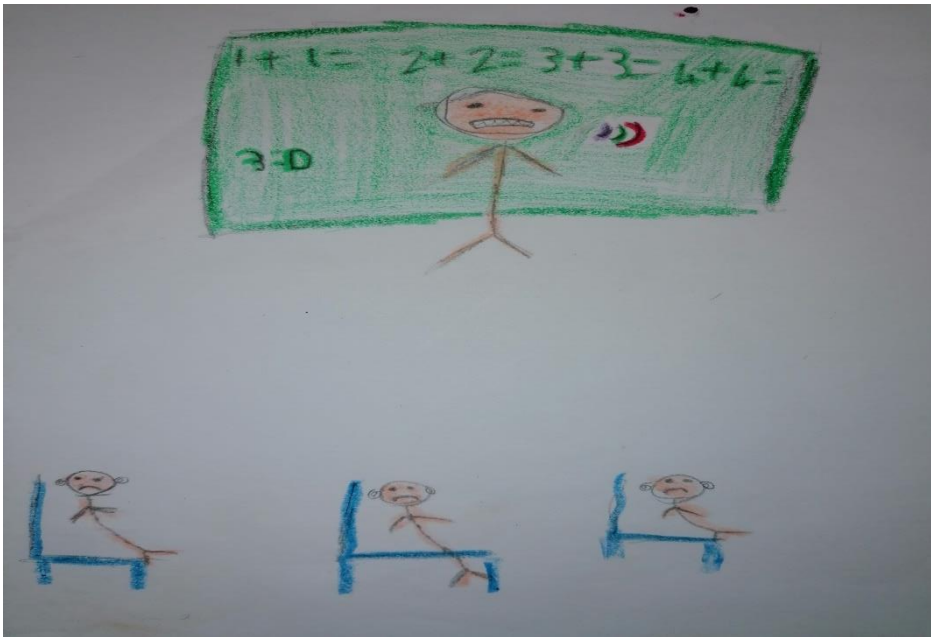**L6** "*When I am scared, I talk to a flower, I tell it that I am too scared".*

Researcher What helps you feel better when you are scared?

L6 *"I feel better when I talk to a flower"*

Researcher Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?

L6 *"Yes, a flowe*

L7B9M

Researcher   Tell me more about your drawing"

L7   *"I drew myself in the classroom and my teacher is angry and shouting me".*

Researcher   When do you feel scared?

L7   *"I am scared when a teacher is shouting me and showing angry face".*

Researcher   What do you do when you are scared?

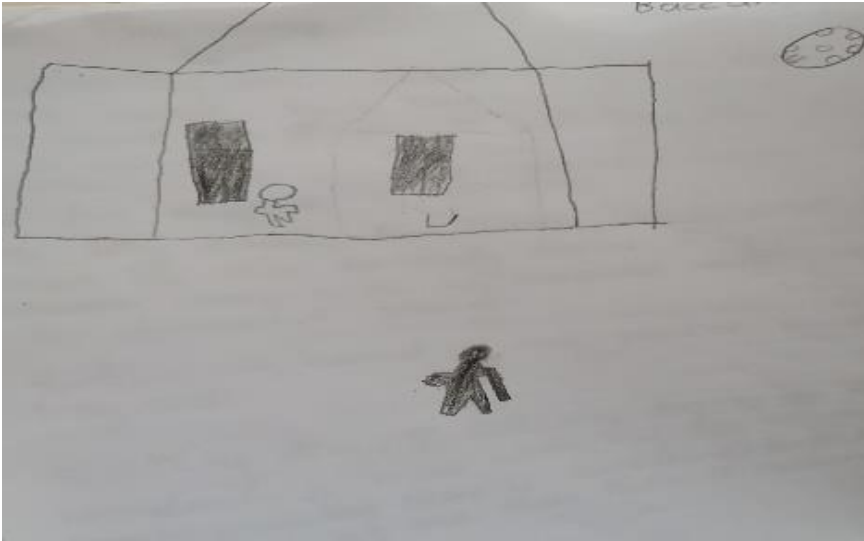**L7**   *"When I am scared, I speak to my friends"*

Researcher   What helps you feel better when you are scared?

L7   *"My friends help me feel better"*

Researcher   Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?

L7   *"My friends"*

L8B8M

Researcher   Tell me more about your drawing

L8   *"I drew myself left alone in the house, at night"*

Researcher   When do you feel scared?

L8   *"I feel scared, when I'm left alone in the house because I see a dark*

shadow of a person…..I think is a ghost. I am the only one who see that

black shadow. If I turn the lights off, I see the body of black shadow"

Researcher   What do you do when you are scared?

**L8**   *"My daddy say when I'm scared, I should run to the his room."*

Researcher   What helps you feel better when you are scared?

 L8   *"I put my hands in my pocket and scratch myself"*

Researcher   Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?

L8   *"My dog, I tell my dog to go check in the window. I know when my dog*

touch me…...uhm, then there is something, but if the dog bark at me

then there is nothing"

L9G9H
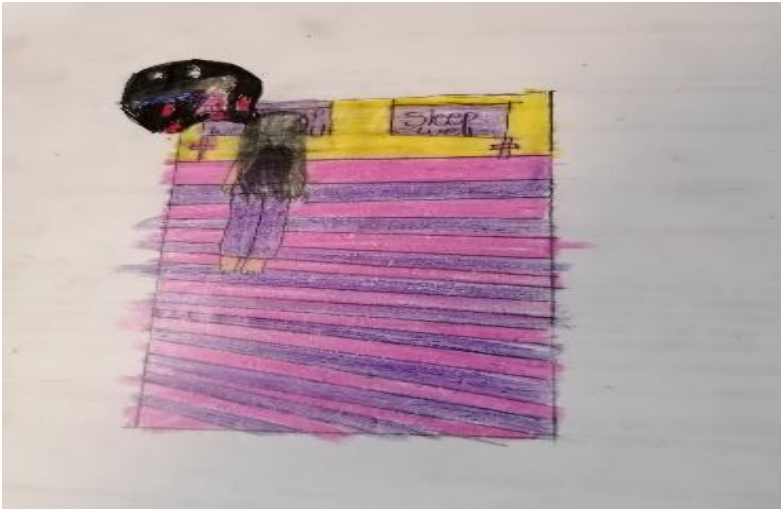
Researcher	Tell me more about your drawing
L9	*"I drew myself sleeping, and I had a nightmare of a shark eating me. I was trying to run away but the shark was following me"*
Researcher	When do you feel scared?
L9	*"I feel scared at night, dreaming of a shark eating me"*
	"I actually fear the blood that a shark can do to me".
Researcher	What do you do when you are scared?
L9	*" When I am scared I run to my parents' bedroom".*
Researcher	What helps you feel better when you are scared?
L9	*"I feel better, when I talk to friends"*
Researcher	Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?
L9	*"Yes, my friends makes me feel better"*

L10G9H

|	
Researcher	Tell me more about your drawing
L10	*"I drew myself and my sister, we were alone at home. I needed to talk to someone because I am scared and sad that my friend got bullied at school. My grand father often shout my granny, because he has anger issues at home". My grand father has work problems and he wants to put his anger issues on us.*
Researcher	When do you feel scared?
L10	"*I feel scared when I go into the dark, and when I'm left home alone"*
Researcher	What do you do when you are scared?
L10	*"When I'm scared, I just sit down and use my phone to call my parents"*
Researcher	What helps you feel better when you are scared?
L10	*"I talk to my sister to feel better. My little brother calm me down".*
Researcher	Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?
L10	"*My mom helps me feel better"*

L11B8H
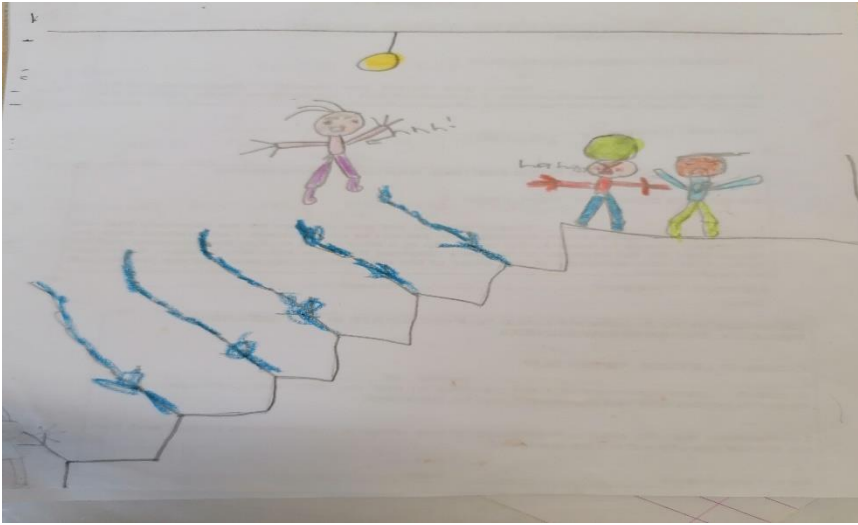
|	
Researcher	Tell me more about your drawing
L11	*"I am scared that the thieves could kill my parents, and then the thieves throw the spikes and if my parents die and after death I'm going to be very sad and lonely".*
Researcher	When do you feel scared?
L11	*"I feel scared, when the thieves hijacked my parents. They tried to kill my parents, and they were busy laughing hahaha"*
Researcher	What do you do when you are scared?
L11	*"I go to my parents' room and tell them I'm scared and they give me cup of milk".*
Researcher	What helps you feel better when you are scared?
L11	*"Going to my parents' bedroom"*
Researcher	Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?
L11	*"Yes, my parents"*

L12G9H
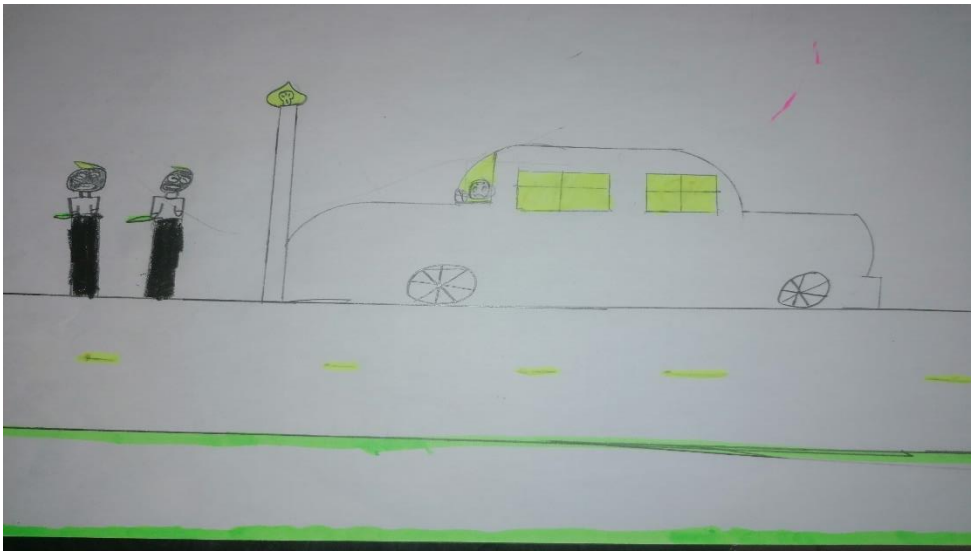
Researcher	Tell me more about your drawing
L12	*"My drawing is about car accident and kidnappers. I feel scared when there is car accident and kidnappers because I think they will kidnap me".*
Researcher	When do you feel scared?"
L12	*"I feel scared when my grandparents were kidnapped. When there are Kidnappers, I think that they are going to kidnap me".*
Researcher	What do you do when you are scared?
L12	*"I call the police"*
Researcher	What helps you feel better when you are scared?
L12	*"My mom and dad calms me down"*
Researcher	Is there someone that makes you feel better when you are scared?
L12	*"Yes, there is, my mom, dad, sister and baby brother. My baby brother calm me down, he say don't cry, I 'm here"*

APPENDIX I: TEACHERS RESPONSE TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview responses for Teacher 1

Interview schedule for teachers

1. Tell me about yourself. My name ▉▉▉ [Teacher 1]
I am a grade 3 teacher, Although my qualification is for FET. I've never taught in the FET but I believe a teacher is a teacher. I've lived in ▉▉▉ all my life. I enjoy working as a teacher. I love to see children develop holistically.

2. What are some of the community adversities/community problems you are aware of?
Child abuse, GBV. Unemployment, poverty, drug & alcohol abuse, bullying, crime and illitracy.

3. What role does the community play in causing fear in young children?
- By being violent to children and each other.
- Fowl language.

4. What do you think are the reasons for fear in young children?
They don't feel safe and protected.

5. Can you tell me about typical fear you encounter with children in your class?
- Loud voice - When I speak or read to them in a loud voice they looke afraid.

6. What are the typical attributes of children who are fearful?
- Lack of attention
- Easily distracted
- Tiredness and sleepiness

7. What role does the school play in causing fear in young children?
- Sending them home to give messages to parents who are not cooporative. These parents mostly respond with aggression.

Interview responses for Teacher 2

1. Tell me about yourself.

I am a teacher In middle socio-economic status school. I have been teaching here for 8 years I am also a wife and a mum to two daughters.

2. What are some of the community adversities/community problems you are aware of?

Covid-19 has affected our community. People are scared of catching the virus. People have lost jobs due to the virus and have many financial issues

3. What role does the community play in causing fear in young children?

It completely affects them. They are scared of getting sick and dying. Seeing all the screening tools, teermometers etc fill them with fear.

4. What do you think are the reasons for fear in young children?

They fear being left alone (Parents dying) getting kidnapped or murdered.

5. Can you tell me about typical fear you encounter with children in your class?

They often get upset if a parent is late to collect them and fear being left alone forever.

6. What are the typical attributes of children who are fearful?

They are not happy. They withdraw into themselves. They complain of tummy aches. or head aches.

7. What role does the school play in causing fear in young children?

We try to make school a safe place for them. We act as if the virus is no big deal so they don't pick up teacher fear.

Interview responses for Teacher 3

<u>Interview schedule for teachers</u>

1. Tell me about yourself.

   I'm 62 years old. I did a few things and different jobs before I started studying for a teacher. I got my qoulifications at the age of 50. But I have been teaching for about 23 years.

2. What are some of the community adversities/community problems you are aware of?

   Children live with grandparents that most of the times is not able to speak English and help the children with work that goes home.

3. What role does the community play in causing fear in young children?

   There are such a lot of bad things happening and they witness allot of these things.

4. What do you think are the reasons for fear in young children?

   We as adults are always talking or telling them that they can be abducted if they get into a unknown persons car. Covid is also not making things easier for them.

5. Can you tell me about typical fear you encounter with children in your class?

   Fear of telling the parents if they did something wrong. Taxi's not arriving at the after school.

6. What are the typical attributes of children who are fearful?

   Crying, headaches, tummy aches, caughing and not responding to instructions sitting alone and have no friends

7. What role does the school play in causing fear in young children?

   We really try at Curro Academy Pretoria to be possitive and not create fear in the children.

When I feel scared

By Francinah Masola

Illustrated: Dr Francinah Masola

'I am always scared and I don't, understand why' says Lesedi.

I feel scared when I am left alone at home.

I feel scared when

I am watching television.

I feel scared when
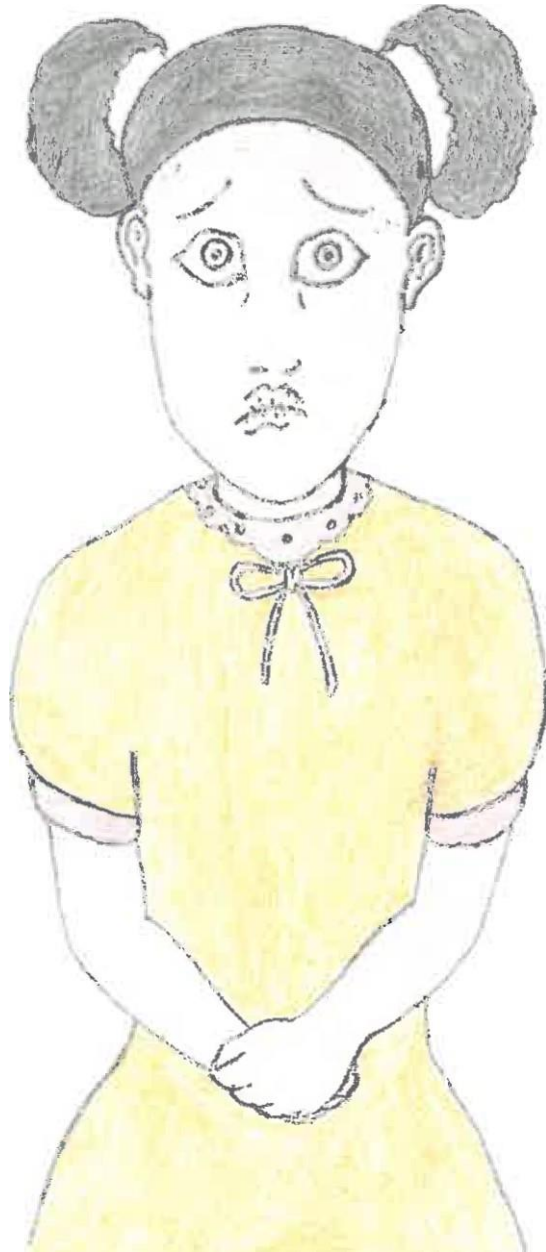# I have a bad dream

I feel scared when family members are fighting in the home.

I feel scared when other children at, school do not want to play with me.

When I feel scared, my eyes are big and my mouth become dry and my heart is pounding very loud.

When I am scared, I need to talk to someone to feel better.