

THE EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE ON THE ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND RESILIENCE OF STUDENTS

by

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(19182989)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Educationis
(Educational Psychology)

in the

Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

SUPERVISOR

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December 2023

DEDICATION

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” - Isaiah 41: 10

I dedicate this dissertation to God who aligned me to come across everyone who was part of this journey and so ensured that this dissertation has come to completion.

Your plans are perfect and always on time. I have learnt to trust in You fully.

My parents, thank you for the sacrifices you have made from my young age to this point - I am forever indebted to you.

My ancestors, I hope the enlightenment in this dissertation will find its way to heal the intergenerational traumas that have for the longest time threatened the health and well-being of our family.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Matsie Mary Racheke, declare that the mini dissertation titled '*The effects of childhood abuse on the resilience and academic attainment of students at the University of Pretoria*', which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in the Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



Matsie Mary Racheke

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MEd

The effects of childhood abuse on the
academic attainment and resilience of
students

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APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY

17 August 2021

DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reaching this remarkable milestone in my career would not have been possible without the following individuals, and I want to convey my heartfelt appreciation to them:

- ❖ **My parents:** Mashapa Abraham Racheke and my late mother Dineo Caroline Ngadlele Mokhamisi, thank you for believing in my dreams and the support you have given me throughout the years. I am who I am because of you.
- ❖ **My supervisor:** Professor J.G. Maree, I appreciate your professionalism, extraordinary guidance, and steadfast support. I will forever be deeply thankful to you because, without your help and your push for excellence, I would not have successfully completed this mini dissertation.
- ❖ **My fiancé,** Matome Seduo, I'm grateful for your patience, leadership, and the invaluable support you've given me throughout the years. Thank you for your encouragement on days when I felt overwhelmed. You were the helper I never knew that I needed.
- ❖ **My son:** Moloko Amon Seduo, thank you for being patient with me, for being cheerful and bubbly, that is what I needed to get through this journey. You have brought meaning into my life.
- ❖ **My research participants:** I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for your willingness to share your stories with me. I consider myself truly fortunate to have crossed paths with you, and my interactions with you will be etched in my memory forever. Your determination, strength and resilience are truly remarkable. I wish you all the success in your future endeavours.
- ❖ **My siblings and extended family:** Metse, Sebela, Masoko, Mmaselaelo, Nnini, Molatelo, and Florah – thank you for your support and understanding throughout this journey. I consider myself privileged to have you as siblings.
- ❖ **External coder:** Dr Kudawashe Muchena, thank you for all your support, and especially for your help with external coding.
- ❖ **My language editor:** Mrs Isabel Claassen, thank you for your efficient and professional service.
- ❖ **My technical editor:** Mrs Mardeleen Müller, thank you for your meticulous and professional assistance



ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is the most common and widespread form of human rights abuse in South Africa. Every day, women and children are subjected to physical and sexual assault, threats, humiliation and even murder (Divorce Laws, 2020). The violence inflicted upon children is especially lamentable because abusive childhood events have been proven to contribute negatively to health and wellness in adulthood (Beutel et al., 2017). Despite immense efforts to curb this scourge, childhood abuse remains a critical challenge facing South African society (UNICEF, 2021).

According to Hmurovich (2014), the type of abuse suffered by the affected child could practically predict their future behaviour as an adult – hence he implies that adverse effects are inevitable. Werner (1996, as cited in Beutel et al., 2017) disagrees and asserts that not everyone who experienced stressful life experiences (such as childhood abuse) suffers from mental distress later in life – in fact, many adjust well. This inconsistency indicates that more research needs to be conducted on resilience and on the survivors of abuse who have defied the odds.

The current study was qualitative in nature and adopted an exploratory qualitative research approach and methodologies. An interpretive research paradigm was the lens through which the data was examined. A collective case study design with elements of narrative biography was the chosen research design for this study. Six participants were chosen using purposive sampling. Data was gathered through interviews and analysed inductively using thematic analysis.

The aim of the study was to gain insight into some of the factors that contributed to the academic attainment and resilience of survivors of childhood abuse. I used the Career Interest Profile (CIP) (Maree, 2018), which is a qualitative career questionnaire. In addition, I wished to discover how best survivors of childhood abuse (especially children) could be empowered and supported to reach their full potential despite adversity.

Survivors of childhood abuse involved in this study were influenced by a combination of intrinsic factors to childhood abuse in the sense that childcare workers, teachers, and parents were equipped with support strategies and interventions that could be used to mitigate the negative effects of abuse. Like self-efficacy, resilience, locus of control, and goal setting, as well as extrinsic factors such as agency, support systems, a sense of purpose (meaning making), and career aspirations. These factors empowered survivors to

overcome past trauma and work towards resilience and academic attainment. The study potentially helped children who had been exposed.

Key words:

Academic Attainment, Resilience, Childhood Abuse, and Education



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to understand the connection between childhood abuse, educational attainment, and resilience in students. Abuse in all forms affects children's mental and physical health and often carries on into adulthood (Cameranesi et al., 2019). Substance abuse, suicide, and risky sexual behaviour are some of the behaviours that result from childhood abuse (Otero, 2020). Furthermore, childhood abuse can also cause increased occurrences of post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, anxiety disorders and personality disorders in adult survivors (Beutel et al., 2017). Examples of physical health problems include obesity, cancer, chronic heart problems, hypertension, and diabetes (Nelson, Butta, Buck-Harris, et al., 2020). Otero (2020) emphasises that childhood abuse decreases the chances of adult survivors attaining a post high school qualification, and Gubbels, Assink, van der Put, et al. (2019) add that not obtaining a qualification after high school may result in financial deprivation. Henry et al. (2018) agree and suggest that childhood abuse survivors are more likely to fall in the low socio-economic status group and suffer an increased rate of unemployment.

There is a growing bulk of literature that focuses on resilience factors in children (Masten & Barnes, 2018). This shift has resulted from the belief that not everyone who experiences child abuse suffers long-lasting adverse effects (Werner, 1996, as cited in Beutel et al., 2017). Many studies, such as the one conducted by Theron and Haffejee (2019), focus on the resilience of sexually abused survivors. However, there is a scarcity of literature that focuses on all the forms of abuse and how they impact on the resilience and educational attainment of survivors. This contradiction has been the factor that inspired this study.

In the available literature, the terms child abuse, adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and childhood maltreatment are used interchangeably. Adverse childhood experiences include a wide range of child maltreatment practices as well as unfortunate situations such as losing a parent and poverty (Nelson et al., 2020), whereas childhood abuse specifically refers to all forms of abuse and neglect experienced by children including physical, emotional/psychological, verbal and sexual abuse. This study accepts the definition of child abuse as formulated by the World Health Organization (WHO). The sections that follow describe the background, rationale and the purpose of this study, the research questions

addressed, the theoretical underpinning and nature of the study, a definition of the terms used, the assumptions made, as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Domestic violence is the most common and widespread form of human rights abuse in South Africa. Every day, women and children are physically and sexually assaulted, threatened, humiliated, and even murdered (Divorce laws, 2020). The violence inflicted upon children is especially lamentable because abusive childhood events are proven to contribute negatively to health and wellness in adulthood (Beutel et al., 2017). Despite immense efforts to curb this scourge, domestic violence remains a critical challenge to South African society (UNICEF, 2021).

Golding, Dent, Nissim, et al. (2006) maintain that trauma in childhood causes a breakdown in the natural order of a child's development. Beutel et al. (2017) agree that children are extremely vulnerable, especially during the early developmental phases. If they suffer harm at the hands of people (especially those who are close to them, who are expected and supposed to support them, help them, and provide for them) during these phases, they may suffer severe bodily, neurological and/or mental impairment. This compromises their ability to handle psychological and somatic stressors during the rest of their life (Beutel et al., 2017).

Adverse childhood experiences can also be linked to a range of adverse physical and mental conditions. These include maladjustment, an unhealthy lifestyle in adulthood (Golding et al., 2006) and an increased risk of school dropout among teenagers (Morrow & Villodas, 2017). Furthermore, research shows that the developmental phase in which individuals find themselves will co-determine their response to harmful experiences. Adverse childhood experiences, especially during the early biological and psychological developmental years when children's coping capacity is limited, often have a severely negative long-term impact on their wellbeing (Odhayani et al., 2013)

Hmurovich (2014) suggests that children who have been physically abused not only tend to be violent adults, they are also susceptible to mental disorders such as substance abuse, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, anxiety, or behavioural disorders. Many of these children eventually become delinquents, which is one of the main issues that inspired this research study. The devastating effects of childhood abuse are

widely documented, and despite preventative measures that have been put in place to help curb violence against children, cases continue to mount daily in our communities.

Against the background delineated above, this study will explore the effects of childhood abuse and gain insight into what motivates the academic success and resilience of survivors currently enrolled at tertiary institutions.

1.3 THE RATIONALE FOR UNDERTAKING THE STUDY

1.3.1 Academic rationale

According to Hmurovich (2014), the type of abuse suffered by the affected child can practically predict their future behaviour as an adult – he thus implies that adverse effects are inevitable. Werner (1996, as cited in Beutel et al., 2017) disagrees and asserts that not everyone who experienced stressful life experiences (such as childhood abuse) suffers from mental distress later in life. In fact, many adjust well. This inconsistency indicates that more research needs to be conducted on resilience and on survivors of abuse who have defied the odds. The study reported on here focused on the effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment and resilience of students enrolled at the University of Pretoria. Furthermore, it aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge on survivors of childhood abuse. The literature encountered by the researcher, such as the study conducted by Gould et al. (2017), discusses the relationship between dropout rates and childhood abuse, as well as the psychosocial and somatic effects of childhood abuse. However, it does not pay much attention to factors that have helped survivors of abuse who are still at school to achieve academic success on a tertiary level.

1.3.2 Personal rationale

My personal interest in the research topic developed when I worked at a rehab centre for adolescents. Indeed, many of the youths who were addicted to substances reported having been abused in their younger years. The types of abuse ranged from neglect, psychological, physical, verbal, and sexual abuse. In contrast, I have also had encounters with survivors of childhood abuse who are seemingly adjusting well and who excel academically, professionally and in their businesses – despite the odds. This observation sparked an interest in finding out how the latter group overcame abuse, and how to promote a sense of resilience, healthy development, and personal leadership in children so as to possibly prevent school dropouts, severe psychological illnesses and self-destructive behaviours.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into some of the factors that contributed to the academic attainment and resilience of survivors of childhood abuse. In addition, the researcher wished to discover how best survivors of childhood abuse (especially children) can be empowered and supported to reach their full potential in the face of adversity. The findings of this study could potentially be helpful to children who have been exposed to childhood abuse in the sense that they will equip childcare workers, teachers, and parents with support strategies and interventions that can be used to mitigate the negative effects of abuse.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following main research question was formulated for this study:

What are the effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment and resilience of six male and female students from different social strata studying in the science, education, medical, and psychology fields?

1.5.1 Secondary questions

The secondary questions to be asked in this study are as follows:

1.5.1.1 Descriptive questions

- ❖ What are the characteristics of childhood abuse?
- ❖ What psychological intervention programmes are implemented in schools to help children cope with childhood abuse?

1.5.1.2 Exploratory questions

- ❖ How did the participants experience childhood abuse?
- ❖ How was participants' motivation to stay in school influenced by their experience of childhood abuse?

1.6 METATHEORETICAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This study was based on the social cognitive career theory (SCCT). The SCCT is a framework for understanding how individuals develop career and academic interests, how they make educational and vocational choices, and how they achieve academic and career success (Kelly, 2009). The SCCT concepts such as self-efficacy and locus of control also

formed part of the conceptual framework of this study. The study also incorporated the Career Interest Profile (*CIP*) as an intervention rooted in the career construction theory (CCT). I drew on the *CIP* to elicit responses that would enhance my understanding of the adverse consequences of childhood abuse. To this end, I interviewed survivors on factors that contributed to their resilience and academic attainment. The lens of my conceptual framework was used to analyse the data.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN

A collective case study with elements of a narrative-biography research design was employed as the researcher wished to tap into the narratives of participants. The researcher selected multiple cases to demonstrate the similarities, differences and different perspectives of the phenomenon under study, based on the participants' background.

1.8 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The study adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative researchers study people in their normal contexts in an attempt to understand the phenomenon being studied and the meaning that participants ascribe to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). They also empathise and identify with the people they are studying to understand how they see things (Taylor et al., 2016). An important feature of the qualitative research method is that it uses open-ended exploratory questions instead of closed questions (Maree et al., 2019).

A qualitative research methodology suited this study as the researcher aimed to learn more about the effects of child abuse on academic attainment and resilience, based on the first-hand experiences of students. Insight into students' academic attainment and resilience was achieved because the chosen approach gave participants room to explain and narrate their experiences. According to Maree et al. (2019) the exploratory research approach is a qualitative research approach that aims to identify critical issues and variables and understand a phenomenon, a group of people, or a social setting. The exploratory research approach formed part of the lens through which the researcher conducted this study.

1.9 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

1.9.1 Academic attainment

Novo and Calixto (2009) argue that educational attainment is a broader concept than educational achievement. Educational "achievement" basically refers to the accomplishments that students realise at a place of learning through qualitative and

quantitative assessments or through obtaining a school mark that indicates progress or failure. Educational achievement expressed quantitatively (id est, in terms of grades only) solely demonstrates the ability of students to pass academically; it does not regard other factors such as adjustment and the adaptation styles of students in institutions of learning. Educational “attainment,” on the other hand, “embraces academic and cognitive qualifications but also personal, interpersonal, and institutional variables that are involved in the process of progressing through schooling levels” (Novo & Calixto, 2009, p. 1). Educational attainment is a crucial determinant of health and success later in life (Lochner, 2011, as cited in Magnuson et al., 2016).

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2021) defines educational attainment as a set of standards for acquired knowledge that a student must master before being considered for the next educational step, level, or grade. Similarly, Statistics Canada (2021) defines educational attainment as the highest level of education that one has successfully accomplished according to the learning objectives of that level, classically authenticated through the assessment of learnt knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Educational attainment is indicative of the successful mastery of academic, behavioural, and interpersonal skills (Magnuson et al., 2016). In the current study, the selected participants attained success because they successfully completed Grade 12 and are pursuing a tertiary qualification at the University of Pretoria.

1.9.2 Resilience

The term “resilience” has been and is still being researched across many disciplines. Yet, Hölftge et al. (2021) suggest that there is no absolute definition of resilience. In developmental psychopathology, resilience is described as the ability to handle challenges while maintaining one’s unified sense of individuality (Gamezy & Masten, 1998, as cited in Ledesma, 2014). In psychology, resilience is simply defined as people’s capacity to endure and overcome significant challenges or adversities by mending themselves (Higgins, 1994, as cited in Ledesma, 2014). Southwick et al. (2014, as cited in Masten, 2014) define resilience as people’s ability to function normally in spite of contact with life stressors. For the current study, I drew on the definition as formulated by Masten (2014): the ability of a dynamic system to become accustomed effectively to the instabilities that threaten its utility, capability, and growth.

Several self-confessed childhood abuse survivors who managed to maintain their sense of self, who bounced back from hardships despite exposure to significant stressors and who

are studying towards a tertiary qualification at the University of Pretoria, were involved as participants.

1.9.3 Childhood abuse

The World Health Organization (WHO) explains child abuse as “all forms of physical and emotional ill-treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to children’s health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust, or power” (WHO, 2020, para 1). Child abuse involves any form of behaviour that harms a child (in this case, anyone under 18). It takes many forms, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, but also neglect and exploitation (Reachout.com, 2020). Survivors who have been exposed to childhood abuse before the age of 18 were involved as participants in the current study.

1.9.4 Education

Education is the process that takes place in a school, college, or university where people are taught basic academic knowledge, learning skills and social standards (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Tirri (2016), believe education goes beyond gaining knowledge or growing cognitive capabilities, and add that education develops people holistically (spiritually, socially, emotionally) and helps with motivation. Postma (2015) defines education as a lifelong process through which people work on themselves to acquire and share important concepts, knowledge, skills, and processes that are not solely the responsibility of a teacher. Kapur (2018) defines education as a process by which people acquire knowledge, information and materials that are necessary for their progression. In her opinion, education is an important configuration of the social structures that shape people’s personalities and cultures, and that prepare them for life and the kind of society in which they exist and should exist (Kapur, 2018). The above definitions were taken into account in this study, thus education was defined as a lifelong process where knowledge and skills are gained in schools, colleges and tertiary institutions with the aim of developing learners academically, cognitively, spiritually, and socially.

1.9.5 Biopsychosocial approach

The biopsychosocial approach that stems from the biopsychosocial model of health (Babalola et al., 2017) was also adopted in this study. This model aims to assess the interrelationship between biological (genetics, nutrition, and physical health), psychological (thoughts, emotions and coping skills), and social (social relationships, support structures and environmental) factors that influence people’s behaviour in terms of health and

wellbeing (Savarimalai et al., 2021). The biopsychosocial approach takes on a holistic understanding of people and their contexts (Babalola et al., 2017). For purposes of this study, the bio-psycho-social impact of childhood abuse on survivors relates to the relationship between childhood abuse and long-term physical, mental and social wellbeing.

1.10 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

A research paradigm is a way of viewing the world, and it includes distinct theoretical viewpoints that influence a researcher's decision regarding the methodology to be utilised during the research process (Mertens, 2005, as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). In this study, I used an interpretivist research paradigm.

1.11 DATA GENERATION

Flick (2018) defined qualitative data gathering as the process of gathering oral or visual materials for the purpose of analysing and understanding phenomena, individual and shared experiences, as well as the related meaning-making processes. Data used in this study was gathered through interviews and administering the Career Interest Profile (*CIP*) questionnaire (Maree, 2018).

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A process of deductive thematic data analysis was used for the analysis and interpretation of data. Data was analysed thematically according to the guidelines of thematic data analysis as well as guidelines of the *CIP* questionnaire.

1.13 QUALITY CRITERIA

To ensure dependability, conformability, transferability and credibility of the findings of this study, quality assurance strategies were implemented. The quality strategies are further explained in Chapter 3 of this research report.

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When conducting qualitative research, the protection of human participants through the application of clear and appropriate ethical principles is very important (Arifin, 2018). These ethical guidelines protect both the researcher and the participants. The ethical considerations that guided this study are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.15 OUTLINE OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Orientation of the study

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research design

Chapter 4: Research results and discussion of findings

Chapter 5: The findings of the current study within the context of literature

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

1.16 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter served as an introduction to this study. The researcher briefly indicated both her personal and academic rationale for conducting this study. A brief literature review was provided to contextualise the study, but this will be expanded in the next chapter. Furthermore, the researcher outlined specific research questions that acted as a guide for participants in answering this study's main research question. The theoretical framework and research design that informed this study were also introduced. Next followed a clarification of the key concepts linked to this study. The methodological approach adopted in this study, as well as the paradigm, data generation, data analysis, and quality criteria, was indicated. Lastly, the researcher provided a brief explanation of the importance of ethical considerations, which are explored in detail in Chapter 3.



CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview of the literature that underpins this research study. The chapter starts with the discourse on child abuse and then the history of childhood abuse campaigns in the United States and South Africa. This is followed by the definitions of all forms of child abuse and a discussion of the prevalence and statistics regarding such abuse. The bio-psychosocial impact of child abuse and its related risk factors are also discussed. Furthermore, Chapter 2 provides a brief history of resilience research, both abroad and in a South African context. A discussion of various literature on educational attainment and the consequences of school dropouts on the systems concerned follows next. Lastly, existing research on child abuse, resilience and academic attainment is discussed.

2.2 CHILD ABUSE

2.2.1 History of legislation against child abuse

2.2.1.1 *Focus on the situation in the USA*

According to Barnett et al. (1993), campaigns against child abuse started gaining momentum in the United States already in the early 17th century. At the time, the Protestant Church believed that children should not only be taught, but also be properly inducted in church values and morals. Part of this induction included corporal punishment. Furthermore, since there were laws to protect children from living in misery with poverty-stricken parents, some parents deviously faked a poor facade to be relieved from taking care of their children. The government consequently changed the laws to distinguish between laziness, child neglect, and impoverished parents. To promote cultural attitudes that became increasingly supportive of legal intervention when families demonstrated little concern for their children's wellbeing (Barnett et al., 1993), emphasis was placed on rehabilitating families and assisting parents with the maintenance of their children (Barnett et al., 1993).

In the 18th century, US parents appeared in court when they maltreated their children, but judges' decisions were based on what had led to the abuse and did not necessarily consider the severity of the child's injuries (Barnett et al., 1993). The courts typically ruled in favour of parents when the evidence suggested that the punishment was a form of disciplinary action,

as this was not seen as maltreatment but merely as ‘straightening’ your child (Barnet et al., 1993). Towards the end of the 18th century, however, child abuse became a national concern when cases were reported of adopted children suffering physical abuse as well as neglect. During the 19th century, child abuse increasingly gained attention as a social problem in need of urgent remedy (Poole et al., 2014). In the 20th century the focus increasingly fell on the protection and provision of places of safety for children who were believed to have experienced abuse (Yarrow, 2009). These efforts were in response to the publication by Kempe et al. (1962) of the battered child syndrome, in which the impacts of child abuse such as severe brain damage and bone fractures were reported. The international society for the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect was formed (Crane, 2015), and led to community-based grants being dedicated to the prevention of child abuse/neglect programmes and activities. These grants also support voluntary home visits, resource centres that provide parental support and positive parenting programmes and interventions (Hendrikson & Blackman, 2015).

2.2.1.2 Focus on the situation in SA

South Africa has also had a long history of laws pertaining to children abuse, dating from the apartheid years. Abrahams and Matthews (2011, p. 13) suggest that “[d]uring the apartheid era, children’s rights were grossly violated and as such, large numbers of children were arrested, imprisoned, and held in custody for participating in political activities”. During this period, non-profit organisations (NPOs) established programmes that aimed to promote the rights of vulnerable children in the disadvantaged parts of South Africa (Unicef, 2021). Between the 1970s and early 1990s, various non-profit establishments played a substantial part in the development of children’s rights engagements in South Africa, and the focus was essentially on children in an apartheid context (Unicef, 2021).

After the apartheid era, local legislation such as Section 28 of the Bill of Rights, the Children’s Amendment Act 41 of 2007, as well as the Children’s Justice Act 7 of 2008 were introduced to protect the rights of children (Childline SA, 2020). In line with this purpose, the Department of Social Development and non-profit organisations such as Childline SA and Child Welfare SA have taken on the mandate of advocating, protecting, and promoting children’s rights. Every year from 27 May to 2 June, South Africans now observe Child Protection Week (Childline SA, 2020).

2.2.2 Forms of child abuse

As noted in Chapter 1, childhood abuse comes in different forms – physical, emotional, sexual and neglect. Physical abuse is a non-accidental injury or physical harm inflicted upon a child, of which the injuries include cuts, bruises, burns, fractures and also the administration of drugs with the intent of sedating the child (Welson & Mohamed, 2019). Sexual abuse is any sexual contact with a minor child – from exhibitionism to intercourse or the use of a child for sexual pleasure. This includes an adult/older child showing a child his/her genitals, touching the child’s genitals, forcing the child to touch his/her genitals, forcing the child to touch his/her own genitals while the adult watches, oral/genital contact, sexual intercourse, forcing the child to watch pornographic material (Childline SA, 2020). Emotional abuse involves the type of behaviour that adversely affects the child’s emotional development and sense of self-worth. It includes extreme, aggressive, or absurd demands that place expectations on a child beyond his/her capacity (Welson & Mohamed, 2019). Child neglect is not only the failure to provide children with satisfactory nutrition, shelter, safety, care and attention, it also includes actively denying children these important resources even though they are available (Childline S A, 2020).

2.2.3 Prevalence of childhood abuse and relevant statistics

Child abuse is a common phenomenon that can occur anywhere, regardless of culture, ethnicity, or economic status (Psychology Today, 2020). According to the Optimus study on childhood abuse published in 2016, about 784 967 South African children have been subjected to some type of sexual abuse in their lifetime (Ward et al., 2016). The results of the Optimus study show that

“35.4% of children had experienced some form of sexual abuse in their lifetime, including unwanted touching, being forced to have sex, ‘flashing’ or unwanted exposure to sexual activity or content and consensual sex between an adult and a child less than 15 years old and younger” (Ward et al., 2016, p. 461).

Furthermore, whereas 36.8% of boys compared to 33.9% of girls reported sexual abuse, boys and girls experienced sexual abuse in different ways (Jamieson et al., 2017). According to Jamieson et al. (2017), girls reported contact sexual assault or being forced to partake in sexual activities, while boys reported more non-touching sexual abuse (such as being forced to watch pornographic material). Recent statistics from Childline SA indicate that 270 311 calls were attended to between 27 March and 30 April 2020 when South Africa was in the strictest (i.e. Level 5) lockdown period. Of those calls, 3831 involved forms of physical abuse

such as abduction, neglect, sexual assault, exposure to pornographic material and emotional abuse (Childline SA, 2020).

2.2.4 The bio-psychosocial impact of child abuse on survivors

In this research report, the bio-psychosocial impact of child abuse on survivors relates to the relationship between childhood abuse and long-term physical, mental and social wellbeing.

The direct and indirect public health and economic costs of violence against children challenge investments in education, health and child well-being, and corrode the productive capacity of future generations (Inspire, 2016). Collings and Penning (2016) suggest that exposure to interpersonal violence during childhood is linked with a variety of traumatic re-enactment behaviours, including victimising others. Research also provides evidence that childhood abuse has mental, physical, social and health consequences. Mentally, abuse can lead to psychological disorders such as personality disorders, depression and anxiety (Friborg et al., 2015). Physically, people who experienced childhood abuse have a greater chance of engaging in substance use, which eventually leads to abuse, poor self-care, chronic illnesses such as diabetes or hypertension, and heart diseases (Otero, 2020). Socially, survivors might later abuse their own parents/partners or display offending behaviour or conduct problems that affect the people around them (Friborg et al., 2015).

According to the WHO (2020), strong evidence shows that violence in childhood increases the risks of injury, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, mental health problems, delayed cognitive development, poor school performance and dropout, early pregnancy, reproductive health problems and attracting non-communicable diseases (Inspire, 2016).

2.2.5 Risk factors that contribute to childhood abuse

A myriad of individual, interpersonal, community and societal factors contribute to childhood abuse. Although children are not to blame for the harm that is perpetrated against them, certain factors have been found to raise their risk of being maltreated (Ndungu et al., 2021). These include parents' lack of understanding of the child's needs and development, disability, poverty, other socio-economic factors such as unemployment, substance abuse in the family, community violence, parents' history of domestic violence, parental distress, and mental illness (Xu et al., 2019).

2.3 RESILIENCE

The healthy development of children in all countries around the globe is hampered by pandemics, violence, disasters, and adversities such as child abuse, which can have adverse effects on individuals, families, and future generations (Masten, 2014). These documented and published adversities have increased concerns about the detrimental effects they have on the development of children (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Increased evidence is also becoming available on resilience research and its inference for practice (Van Breda & Theron, 2018).

Resilience is the ability of a dynamic system to adapt effectively to the instabilities that threaten its utility, capability, and growth (Masten, 2014). Although there is no single and definite definition of resilience (as was noted in Chapter 1), resilience researchers agree that two important features – adversity and positive adaptation – should be present in people for them to be considered resilient (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). Psychiatric conditions should also be absent (Garmezy & Masten, 1986) and the attainment of big developmental milestones should be evident (Shaikh & Kauppi, 2010). The word resilience hails from a Latin verb (*resilire*) which means bounce back (Dias & Cadime, 2017). Resilience research emerged in the field of psychology with a special interest on child psychiatry and developmental psychology, as both disciplines are affected by the consequences of negative childhood experiences (Vernon, 2004). In child psychiatry, this special interest was based on Sigmund Freud's assumption that early adverse experiences contribute to adult psychopathology (Vernon, 2004). Resilience research developed during the 1970s as researchers who studied children at risk of psychopathology and other related complications observed a disparity in groups of children with various risks and adversities (Masten & Barnes, 2018). Some children managed to develop normally and have good outcomes despite adversity (Van Breda & Theron, 2018). For instance, even though they experienced abuse as children, they did not experience adverse consequences such as dropping out of school or failing to adapt successfully in later life (Dias & Cadime, 2017).

This unexpected discovery/observation consequently fuelled many researchers such as Masten (2014), Theron et al. (2015), Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2012) and more, to investigate factors that promote resilience in children to improve their future prospects and prevent negative consequences. Resilience studies pay special attention to factors that protect people from succumbing to the adversity that comes with maltreatment in childhood (Masten, 2014). These factors, termed protective factors, can be assessed on multiple

levels, namely on an individual, a family, and a community level. They also utilise Bronfenbrenner's ecological model which explains how people are not single and static entities but in constant interaction with their physical environment and activities (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). On an individual level, important personal protective factors include individual traits and resources such as a good self-concept and confidence, self-efficacy, hardiness and coping skills (Wang et al., 2014). On a family level, protective factors include good family relations, parental support, and relationships (Ettekal & Mahoney, 2017). Protective factors on a community level involve good relations with community members, good peer relations, and support from the community and religious affiliations (Wang et al., 2014). Studying and understanding the system in which people function is extremely important to determine their resilience (Adegoke, 2015). The current study sought to uncover and understand the protective factors that participants believe have boosted their resiliency level and motivation towards academic attainment.

A study conducted by Theron and Theron (2010) explored 23 research articles published between 1990 and 2008 that focus on youth resilience in South Africa. They reviewed the 23 articles by comparing them to international studies of resilience and concluded that more research needs to be conducted on this phenomenon since resilience differs across cultures and contexts. Theron (2012) suggested that professionals and researchers offering services to the youth need to shift their attention towards uncovering factors that promote resilience and that are endemic to the South African context and culture. Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2012) also conducted a study with the aim of finding how teachers in rural settings promote resilience in their learners and determining some of the factors that hinder the process of resilience. The main finding in their study was that teachers identified and prioritised the needs of the learners and also used the resources at their disposal (i.e. referrals to health centres, social welfare centres and religious organisations) to support learners' individual needs (Ebersöhn & Ferreira, 2012). Both these studies shed light on the importance of considering culture and context when conceptualising resilience. Thus, they guided the current study in terms of carefully defining resilience within participants' context and culture.

2.4 EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

As mentioned in Chapter 1, educational attainment is considered the successful mastery of academic, behavioural, and interpersonal skills (Magnuson et al., 2016). Research shows that survivors of childhood abuse stand a greater chance of not graduating from or completing high school (Gubbels et al., 2019). Child abuse impedes on the survivors' ability

to learn (Makondo & Dlamini, 2017). Children who are subjected to abuse score lower on assessments that measure cognitive abilities and achieve poorer grades than children who have not experienced abuse (Goltermann et al., 2021). These students are more likely than other students to have low self-esteem and less motivated to strive for academic success (Kemboi, 2013). Whereas a great deal of research has been conducted on school dropout rates across the world and its impact on the future prospects of learners (Lee-St. John et al., 2018), much less has been reported on students that have survived abuse, defied the odds and striven after educational success and attainment. Therefore, the present study intends to contribute to the body of knowledge on child abuse and academic attainment, and specifically to determine the factors that contribute to the resilience and academic attainment of survivors.

2.4.1 The importance of education

According to Gubbels et al. (2019), education is a foundation that enables people to be successful and useful (The former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, stated that education is the most powerful tool one can use to change the world. Lee-St. John et al. (2018) agree that education is one of the important necessities in life. Education contributes to a person's employability and creates a greater chance of financial wellness and status, especially in women (Tran et al., 2021). Research on the importance of education has now shifted its focus away from the financial gains of education to its non-financial gains by looking at factors such as health, marriage, and general wellbeing (Tran et al., 2021). Besides learning to read, write, do maths and science, official education nowadays provides people with knowledge on a wide array of topics (Mitra, 2017). Education also provides quality learning throughout a person's lifespan as it teaches problem-solving skills, values, hard work, self-management and morals, all of which are important to conquer adverse personal and social situations (Sibuyi, 2016). Education furthermore equips learners with lifelong skills like confidence, motivation, conscientiousness and reliability (Sibuyi, 2016). Educated people tend to live longer than their uneducated counterparts (Chitiyo & Pietrantoni, 2019).

On an individual level, the benefits of education as mentioned above include a boost of confidence and employability, which hold economic benefits for society as a whole (Hendry et al., 2018). On a family level, employability reduces levels of stress and poverty, substance use and abuse by 60% (Mitra, 2017). Stress, poverty and substance abuse are known to contribute to domestic violence and abuse (Mitra, 2017). On a community level, the benefits of having educated community members are a decline in crime, because educated people

are less likely to engage in criminal activities (Hendry et al., 2018). On a national level, the benefits of having an educated society include less dependence on state resources and programmes, more tax revenue generated (which will benefit maintenance of the country's infrastructure) and improvement of the health and education systems (Mitra, 2017).

2.4.2 The effects of dropping out of school

The Department of Basic Education considers dropping out of school as leaving school before completing the grade last enrolled for (Wegner & King, 2008, as cited in Weybright et al., 2017). The total number of learners who drop out of school continue to rise (Gubbels et al., 2019). It is estimated that 60% of pupils in Grade 1 will eventually drop out before completing Grade 12; by the time they get to Grade 12 only 52% of them will remain registered (Gubbels et al., 2019). This high dropout rate can be attributed to many factors, such as the high number of child-headed households due to HIV/AIDS, the effects of the Corona virus, learning barriers and lack of motivation (Otero, 2020). The lack of education may well perpetuate the cycle of childhood abuse because, as mentioned earlier, learners who drop out of school are less likely to be employed. Goltermann et al. (2021) suggest that this leads to frustration and substance abuse, which in turn give rise domestic violence.

2.4.3 Existing research on child abuse, academic attainment, and resilience

Various perspectives on child abuse, academic attainment and resilience are discussed next. First in line is the general impact of childhood abuse on the lives of children. Next follows the impact of child maltreatment on educational performance, as well as emotional and psychological wellbeing and lastly, the impact of sexual abuse on men who have sex with men in South Africa. The gap found in literature – which led to this study – concludes this section.

Butchart and Hillis (2016) argue that violence against children undermine the impact of investments in their education, health, and well-being. In fact, the medium- and longer-term effect of violence against children, as well as its impact on the country's economy, corrodes the ability of future generations to boost national growth and the economy. As far as the impact of violence or neglect on children's academic performance is concerned, learners who have been abused tend to miss classes, have concentration problems, and ruminate on their abusive experiences. This results in a lack of participation in class activities and discussions, and abused learners often end up having to repeat grades or eventually dropping out of school (Makondo & Dlamini, 2017).

A study conducted by Lloyd (2018) examined the impact of domestic violence on the lives and education of children and the various support interventions that are in place within the education system. Lloyd (2018) found that child abuse caused a disturbance in these children's educational experiences and outcomes, which contributed to emotional, physical, and psychological barriers to their learning. Additionally, Lloyd (2018) found that teachers lack the professional knowledge to support and intervene in cases of abuse. The study acknowledged the importance of teachers' role in the prevention of childhood abuse and the provision of support to survivors, yet failed to provide ways in which survivors can be helped to mitigate the adverse effects of childhood abuse into adulthood (Lloyd, 2018).

A study conducted by Chitiyo and Pietrantonio (2019) also examined the impact of all forms of maltreatment on children's educational performance and on their emotional and psychological wellbeing. They found that child maltreatment is linked with lower cognitive functioning, increased rates of problem behaviour and lower rates of academic achievement. Chitiyo and Pietrantonio (2019) further recommended that teachers should work closely with student counsellors and that schools should develop clear policies on reporting suspected cases of child abuse. Their study did not focus on the effects of childhood abuse on academic attainment and resilience. However, it relates to the purpose of the current study because it sought to examine the impact of child maltreatment on educational performance and overall wellbeing.

Makondo and Dlamini (2017) conducted a study on how child abuse affects the school performance of primary school learners in the Manzini region of Swaziland (now Eswatini). They found that abused learners underperformed and were suspicious of everyone they encountered. Some became anti-social or were wary of others, which negatively impacted their school performance (Makondo & Dlamini, 2017).

A study conducted by Elkonin and Heusser (2014) in South Africa explored the relationship between childhood sexual abuse and HIV sexual risk behaviour among men who have sex with men. Their results showed that men with a background of sexual abuse in childhood were likely to engage in casual and sex-related drug use (Elkonin & Heusser, 2014). Furthermore, men who engaged in sexual activities with men who survived childhood abuse also reported drug use and sex-related drug use – which increases their risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS (Elkonin & Heusser, 2014).

Theron and Haffejee (2019) conducted an important study that focused on resilience processes and aimed to explore the role of agency in the resilience process of adolescent

African girls who have been sexually abused. The researchers found that agency occurred as a product of resilience. This happened through participants ascribing meaning to experiences, the independent choices they make, their belief in themselves, their positive outlook on the future, as well as an efficient support structure. The study by Theron and Haffejee (2019) links up with the current study in terms of aims and objectives. These researchers' main focus was on exploring factors and processes that promote resilience rather than concentrating on the adverse effects of sexual violation among survivors of sexual abuse.

Although child abuse comes in different forms, research confirms that it is crucially important to study the harmful effects of especially two forms of child abuse – physical and sexual abuse. However, besides the fact that not enough research has been conducted on the other forms of abuse, emphasis is typically placed on the negative effects of childhood abuse. Few studies focus on the educational attainment of survivors of abuse or on the protecting factors that can be reinforced to avert the severely negative impact of childhood abuse. The studies on resilience (such as that of Ebersöhn and Ferreira (2012)) are not targeted at uncovering factors that promote resilience and academic attainment in survivors of childhood abuse.

2.5 METATHEORETICAL CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.5.1 Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

Social cognitive theory (SCT), which presumes that behaviour is the result of unceasing collaboration between individual, environmental, and behavioural factors (Meyer et al., 2017), was used as the main theoretical lens for the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in my research. The social cognitive career theory (SCCT) of Lent et al. (1994) (a facet of social cognitive theory) was included in this lens, as it provides a basis for understanding how people develop career-linked interests, how they decide on their career choices and how they achieve success and stability in their careers (Brown & Lent, 2013). The SCCT framework also assumes that people are drawn to activities in which they experience a strong self-efficacy, believing that they possess the skills and social support required to pursue these activities (Iresearch.com, 2020). In this instance, social support is referred to as encouragement from teachers, mentors, guardians, and parents. According to Niles and Harris-Bowlsbey (2016), the SCCT helps address individuals' performance attainment and determination at conquering barriers.

Self-efficacy is a key concept in social cognitive theory (Alexander, 2016). It is defined as people's confidence in their own ability to learn and carry out tasks at designated levels (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020) and contributes significantly to the attainment of other skills and success (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy enhanced by individual performance accomplishments, indirect learning, social influence, and physiological stimulation and responses (Alexander, 2016).

Locus of control (another key component of the Social Cognitive Theory) refers to people's personal philosophy of how much control they have over their affairs and over experiences that determine the outcome of their actions (Koboyashi & Farrington, 2020). Some people believe they control their lives (internal locus of control), while others believe circumstances are beyond their control (external locus of control) (Bandura, 1989). The truth is that all people determine their own lives to some extent (Brown & Lent, 2013). People who have an internal locus of control are usually associated with high achievement and motivation (Rotter, 1996, as cited in Meyer et al., 2017). To exercise some measure of control over one's own development requires good social support to supplement effective mechanisms of personal agency (Bandura, 1989).

The Social Cognitive Theory and its facets provide a basis for understanding the internal and external determinants that may contribute to the educational attainment and resilience of survivors of childhood abuse. Furthermore, it provides a guide on how the research questions explored in this study should be structured, as well as the main themes that should feature in these research questions.

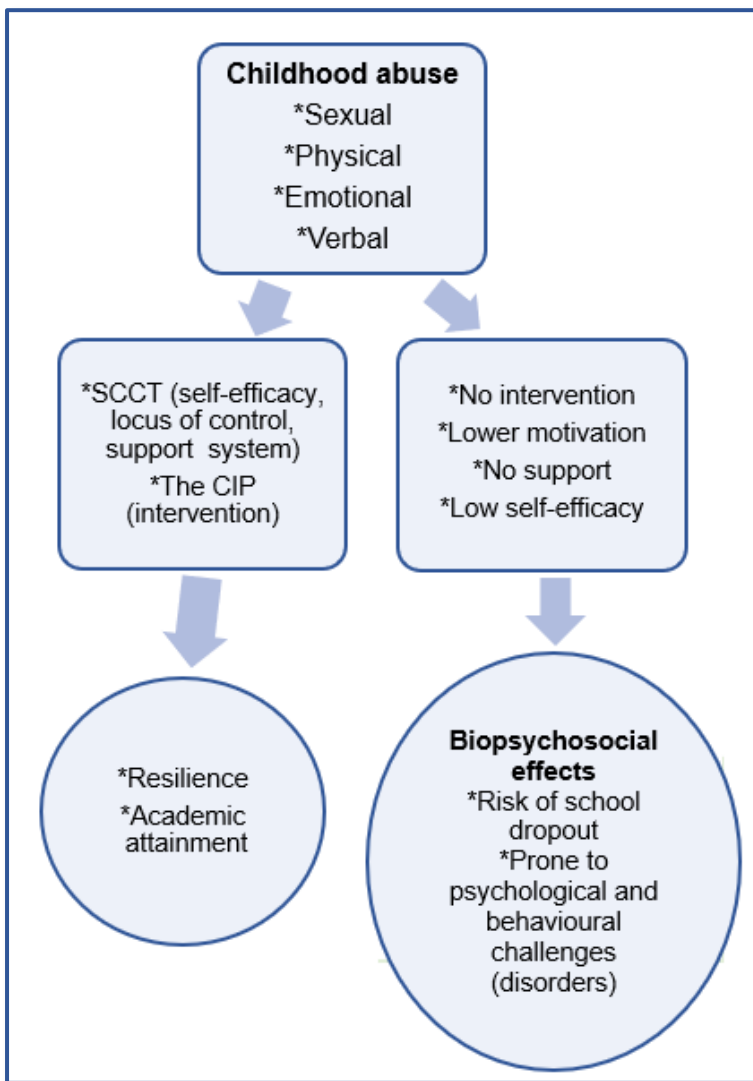
2.5.2 Conceptual framework

The main purpose of a conceptual framework is to justify why a particular study should be conducted (Varpio et al., 2019). Conceptual framework brings together concepts from different theories, which better explain the study (Adom et al., 2018). A conceptual framework also defines the concepts in the study and why they are important to the study (Crawford, 2020). It can be a visual representation or a narration which the researcher hopes to best explain the organic progression of the topic being studied (Adom et al., 2018). As discussed above, the theory proposed for this study is the SCCT, which better explains how individual academic and career interests develop, how educational and career choices are made and how success is attained (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2016).

The researcher’s conceptual framework is based on conducting a thorough literature review (Crawford, 2020). Figure 2.1 depicts a visual representation of how the concepts in the study are related.

Figure 2.1

A conceptual framework for the academic attainment and resilience of childhood abuse survivors



Note: Compiled by Matsie Racheku (2022)

2.5.2.1 Explicating the conceptual framework

Research shows that childhood abuse in all its forms is a forerunner to numerous mental health conditions that significantly impact survivors (Brewer-Smyth & Koenig, 2014). These mental health conditions include depression and anxiety (Odhayani et al., 2013). Other effects of childhood abuse include maladjustment, an unhealthy lifestyle in adulthood (Golding et al., 2006) and an increased risk of school dropout among teenagers (Morrow &

Villodas, 2017). Survivors of childhood abuse are often faced with psychosocial and behavioural challenges (Gould et al., 2017) that prevent them from achieving career success or living a fulfilling life, especially in instances where no intervention/support was sought for the survivor. Conversely, some survivors defy the odds by retaining their sense of self and identity amidst the trauma, and they manage to remain resilient and aim for academic success. This paradox has motivated the researcher to uncover the factors that have led to the resilience and academic attainment of survivors.

SCT and SCCT (Lent et al., 1994) provided the researcher with an analytical lens to examine and understand the importance of self-efficacy in helping learners (in this case, sexual abuse survivors) make sound decisions – especially career-related decisions. Understanding self-efficacy helped the researcher to understand the various influences and support survivors had throughout their lives, and grasping the concept of locus of control (Rotter, 1966) helped the researcher to understand the motivational processes that survivors adopt to be resilient. The *CIP* was incorporated – both as a means of data generation and as an intervention strategy – to establish whether such a strategy could increase the resiliency of the survivors and help them be able to retell or narrate their life stories in a coherent manner. The results of this study could potentially add to the knowledge and development of programmes that prevent childhood abuse and support for survivors.

2.6 SUMMARY

Childhood abuse can have a long-term effect on survivors (Beutel et al., 2017). The well-researched possible effects of childhood abuse include increased levels of school dropouts and psychosocial and behavioural challenges. The literature review presented what is currently known about the effects of childhood abuse on the biological, psychological, and social wellbeing of survivors. However, the gap in literature that needs to be filled relates to the field of resilience and the academic attainment of childhood abuse survivors. A great deal of research focuses on the adverse effects of childhood abuse, and a few focus on finding out what interventions can be made to minimise its negative long-term effects on survivors. Moreover, knowledge is needed about what has motivated childhood abuse survivors who enrolled at university to remain in school and stay resilient, despite their abuse history.

Chapter 2 began with a discussion of what constitutes child abuse and the history of legislation against child abuse, both in South Africa and the United States of America. A discussion on the forms and the prevalence of childhood abuse followed. Furthermore, the

impact of childhood abuse on the biopsychosocial functioning of survivors, and the risk factors were discussed. Educational attainment and the effects of dropping out of school were discussed, as well as how these factors affect individuals, the community, and society. Available research on child abuse, resilience and academic attainment concluded this section, and the gap found in the literature was identified. Lastly, the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study was explained narratively and presented visually.



CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this qualitative study was to gain more knowledge on the effects of childhood abuse on the academic achievement and resilience of students. Chapter 3 starts off by explaining the methodological approach adopted in this study. Thereafter, the paradigmatic approach is discussed in terms of its suitability for this study, as well as its advantages and disadvantages. The criteria for the selection of participants are next discussed in detail. Data-generation methods that were suitable for this study are also explained. Data analysis and interpretation, ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness and the role of a qualitative researcher conclude the chapter.

3.2 NATURE OF THE STUDY

The nature of the study was qualitative. “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 43). The purpose of qualitative research is to produce data and generate an understanding of the social world (Queiros et al., 2017). Nieuwenhuis (2019) believes that what distinguishes qualitative from quantitative research is that qualitative research relies on linguistic (words) rather than on numerical data. Moreover, qualitative research relies on the experiences of people as agents that create meaning in their daily lives (Ahmad et al., 2019). Qualitative research uses many ways of inquiry for the study of human phenomena, including narrative biography, grounded theory, case study and phenomenology (Ahmad et al., 2019). An important feature of this method is that it uses open-ended exploratory questions instead of closed questions (Maree et al., 2019).

A qualitative research methodology was suitable for this study as the researcher aimed to gain insight into and more knowledge about the effects of child abuse on academic attainment and resilience, based on the first-hand experiences of students. Insight into the academic attainment and resilience of students would not be achieved unless the chosen approach gave participants room to explain and narrate their experiences. An exploratory research approach is a type of qualitative research approach that aims to identify key issues and variables, and to understand a phenomenon, a group of people or social setting

(Nieuwenhuis, 2019). An exploratory qualitative research approach also formed part of the lens through which the research questions were studied.

An advantage of using this approach is that participants' natural language is used during interviews (Rahman, 2017), which allows for an authentic understanding of their worldview. A further advantage is that fewer participants are required to provide valuable insight into the phenomena being studied (Maree et al., 2019). Thirdly, since the research design is flexible (Taylor et al., 2016), researchers can change and adapt a new design as the research process unfolds (Queiros et al., 2017).

A disadvantage of the exploratory qualitative research approach is that it is time consuming (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In the current study, more than one session was required because the questions were open-ended. To overcome this challenge, the researcher carefully brought the participants back to the topic whenever they were deviating. In addition, since Maree et al. (2019) stipulate that clear and concise wording is required from the research questions, the researcher ensured that questions were clear and straight to the point to avoid overexplaining and time wastage. Another disadvantage to this approach is that the results cannot be replicated, as different results can come from the same person on different occasions (Rahman, 2017).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a comprehensive plan used by the researcher to collect data during the research process. A qualitative design coupled with an interpretive method was used to answer specific research questions.

The research design employed in this study was a collective case study research design with elements of narrative biography, because we tapped into the narratives of participants. A collective case study consists of more than one case, which may or may not be physically related to other cases (Heale & Twycross, 2017). Case study research is the in-depth examination and analysis of a confined or bounded system or unit in context, in order to examine, reveal, or better understand a phenomenon or a social or cultural issue (Creswell, 2013). Collective case study and narrative inquiry have made a significant contribution to understanding processes that explain the phenomenon under study (Sunday et al., 2022).

A narrative-biography research design assumes that the life world of people can be best understood from their own perspective and their subjective experiences (Creswell, 2013). This research design seeks to unravel significant stories of people's lives as expressed by

them in their own words (Ntinda, 2018). According to Nieuwenhuis (2019), narrative biography is “not just a listing of events, but an attempt to link them both in time and meaning” (p. 84). I considered elements of a narrative-biography research design as ideal for this study, because participants did not have similar lived experiences and perspectives; hence, varying responses could be expected from each participant. Furthermore, a small sample of participants is usually adequate to gather information-rich data (Huber & Hyde, 2017). To fully understand the effects of childhood abuse on educational attainment and resilience, I administered the *Career Interest Profile* (Ver 7) (Maree, 2017). Every participant in my research was allowed the freedom to narrate aspects of their own life stories in a way that best explained the phenomenon being studied. The use of the narrative-biography research design assisted me in identifying key concepts of the SCT during interviews.

3.4 EPISTEMOLOGY ADOPTED IN THE STUDY

A research paradigm is a way of viewing the world. It involves distinct theoretical viewpoints that influence the researcher’s decision about the methodology to utilise during the research process (Mertens, 2005, as cited in Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The research paradigm/approach that best suited this study, was the interpretive approach. The decision to choose this approach was based on the assumptions associated with this approach, as well as on the fact that an interpretive research approach is usually used in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Interpretive researchers believe that people seek to understand the world they live in (Maree et al., 2019). Moreover, they believe that reality is subjective, as it is influenced by culture, context, as well as people’s experiences (Gemma, 2018). Furthermore, social realities can be understood more accurately through the eyes of participants than through those of the researcher (Rherman & Alharthi, 2016). An interpretive approach allows me to gain an understanding of the phenomenon as it relied on participants’ idiosyncratic outlook on how childhood abuse affected their resilience and educational attainment.

An advantage of using this approach is that researchers can obtain a deeper understanding of phenomena from within the context of participants (Creswell, 2014). Another advantage is that information can be gathered in the participants’ normal setting (Pham, 2018). Furthermore, the interpretive approach allows for collaboration between the participant and researcher because the questions used are open ended and semi-structured (Gemma, 2018).

A disadvantage of this approach is that research results cannot be generalised to the general population (Creswell, 2014), seeing that the results only represent the participants' own reality within their context. A further disadvantage is subjectivity, in that the researcher's beliefs, culture, preferences, and interpretation affect the outcome of the study results (Pham, 2018). I fully acknowledged this challenge, and strove to suspend my biases during the research process. Moreover, I used a technique developed by Guba et al. (2016) called member checking, which aided in confirming that the data/results reflected the participants' answers.

3.5 SAMPLING

Nonprobability sampling is a type of qualitative sampling where researchers target a particular group (Cohen et al., 2018), and purposive sampling is a subtype of such sampling (Taylor et al., 2016). Researchers who employ purposive sampling as a sampling procedure select cases to be comprised in the sample, based on their opinion that such cases possess specific qualities suited for the research phenomenon being studied (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). For this study, purposive sampling was the preferred form of sampling procedure because it allowed the researcher to select cases that were information-rich and could provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Cohen et al., 2018). The participants were chosen with a specific purpose in mind (Schreier, 2018). As it was my intention to understand and gain insight into the effects of childhood abuse on academic attainment and resilience; I purposefully selected self-confessed childhood abuse survivors who were enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a tertiary qualification.

The sample consisted of males and females between the ages of 19 and 60. A sample of six participants who were willing to be interviewed were selected for the study. Applying these selection criteria assisted the researcher to acquire data that was rich and adequate to answer the research questions (Schreier, 2018). Participants were recruited by means of flyers designed by the researcher which were posted on notice boards at the Groenkloof, Mamelodi and Hatfield campuses and also through social media student groups (i.e University of Pretoria /Tuks students on Facebook). The flyers provided information about the purpose of the study and stipulated the inclusion criteria.

An advantage of the purposive sampling procedure is that it is usually employed in small-scale research and is less intricate and inexpensive to conduct (Cohen et al., 2018). Moreover, it allows the researcher to be intentional about whom to study so as to increase

the chances of gathering rich data (Phillips, 2014). Table 3.1 provides a descriptive summary of the participants in this study.

Table 3.1

Descriptive summary of participants

PARTICIPANTS		DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY		
Participant's descriptor	Age	Gender	Home language	Ethnicity
Participant 1 (Gloria)	22	Female	isiZulu	Black
Participant 2 (Edward)	35	Male	Sepedi	Black
Participant 3 (Lucy)	28	Female	Tshivenda	Black
Participant 4 (Cliff)	30	Male	Afrikaans	Coloured
Participant 5 (Suzzane)	29	Male	Isizulu	Black
Participant 6 (Joe)	37	Female	siSwati	Black

A disadvantage of purposive sampling is that it is dependent on the researcher's bias (Gaganpreet, 2017). However, since this study was guided by the Social Cognitive Theory and its components such as self-efficacy and internal and external locus of control (which demonstrate the behaviour of people in their respective environments), partiality was minimised (Schreier, 2018). Another disadvantage is that the findings are not characteristic of the broader population (Phillips, 2014). However, the rationale for choosing purposive sampling for this study was not to be able to generalise the findings, but to represent unique cases that have their own value (Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, generalisability was not a goal.

Another disadvantage of using purposive sampling is that participants may manipulate the data being gathered. Robinson (2014) outlined a four-point approach towards the selection of participants that need to be adopted in qualitative research. Each point can repeatedly affect the other three points and vice versa (Robinson, 2014). Table 3.2 served to inform the researcher on the important sampling points in qualitative research that need to be addressed to enhance the quality, transparency, and trustworthiness of research findings.

Table 3.2

Four-point approach to sampling

NAME	DESCRIPTION OF APPROACH
Point 1: Sample universe	Defining the sample universe by specifying the inclusion and exclusion criteria for potential participants.
Point 2: Sample size	Deciding about the sample size by considering paradigmatic and practical concerns.
Point 3: Sample strategy	Selecting purposive sampling as the preferred sample strategy for this study.
Point 4: Sample sourcing	Considering issues of advertisement, incentives, confidentiality and all the important aspects pertaining to a safe and ethical study.

Note: Adapted from “Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide” by O. Robinson, 2014, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 11(1), 2-6. Copyright 2014 by *Qualitative Research in Psychology*.

3.6 DATA GENERATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Flick (2018, p. 7) defines qualitative data generation as “the selection and production of linguistic and (visual materials) for analysing and understanding phenomena, social fields, subjective and collective experiences and the related meaning making processes”. The aim of qualitative data generation is to acquire rich descriptive data that will assist the researcher to better comprehend participants’ construction of information and social experience (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). The methods (strategies and instruments) that were used to gather data for this study are discussed next.

3.6.1 Interviews

Interviews are data-generating methods in which the interviewers ask participants questions (Paradis et al., 2016). In my study, interviews were the preferred means of data generation, and I asked open-ended and semi-closed questions. Moser and Korstjens (2017) argue that interviews elicit participants’ feelings, perceptions, experiences, and thoughts, which is why I considered this method as best suited to this study.

Moreover, gathering data through face-to-face interviews with participants assisted researchers to obtain a richer image of the phenomenon being studied. In instances where face-to-face interviews were not possible, interviews were conducted through Google Meet and Zoom. Both face-to-face and online interviews were recorded and replayed to participants to increase the truthfulness of the data. A total number of two sessions proved

to be enough to ensure data saturation. The basis of choosing semi-structured interviews was that this type of interview sets the structure of the responses but does not presume the nature of the answers (Cohen et al., 2018).

3.6.2 The Career Interest Profile

To complement the data gathering in this study, *the Career Interest Profile (CIP)* questionnaire (Maree, 2018) was administered to participants. The *CIP* (Maree, 2018) is a South African developed questionnaire that aims to facilitate life stories of clients and enable clients to find guidance from within (Van Zyl, 2020) It is a qualitative instrument that aids career counsellors to identify clients' major career life themes (Maree, 2018). According to Van Zyl (2020), the questionnaire consists of four parts as summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

The four parts of the CIP questionnaire

Part 1	Biographical, work and family influence questions
Part 2	Questions relating to career choices
Part 3	Career categories, preferences, and dislikes questions
Part 4	Career story narrative questions

Note: Adapted from Di Fabio and Maree (2013).

A total number of three interview sessions were scheduled with participants. Each session took approximately 40 to 60 minutes.

3.6.3 Reflective journal

A reflective journal is a written record kept by the researcher and the participants separately to document their thoughts, feelings, and reflections throughout the research process (Ortlipp, 2015). The journal contains details of the researchers' and participants' actions, thought processes, and feelings (Ortlipp, 2015). It facilitates reflexivity for qualitative researchers as it enables them to acknowledge their presumptions, values, experiences, and behaviours (Lutz & Paretti, 2019). In this study, the researcher used her reflective journal to document her thoughts, feelings, and decisions. Each of the participants was also provided with a reflective journal to document their thoughts, feelings and reflections during the course of the study.

Table 3.4 presents a summary of qualitative data-generating techniques used in my study. The specific methods were selected with the research questions in mind.

Table 3.4

Data-generating methods used

DATA-GENERATING TECHNIQUE OR INSTRUMENT	DOCUMENTATION METHOD	DATA SOURCE
Interview	Interviews were conducted with participants.	Interviews were based on the concepts of the SCCT, i.e., self-efficacy, locus of control, support system.
Questionnaire	Questions were posed to participants to elicit coherent account of their experiences.	The CIP was an additional instrument to gather data but also to facilitate intervention.
Reflective journal	A reflective research journal was kept by the researcher and each of the participants throughout the study.	Reflective journals were supplied to participants for documenting their reflections throughout the interview process.

3.6.4 Data generation plan

The intervention consisted of three interview sessions where each session lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The sessions were held on campus (research commons). This intervention proceeded over a period of three weeks during June and July 2022. Table 3.5 provides a summary of the data generation plan in sequential form.

Table 3.5
Summary of data generation plan

DATA GENERATION SEQUENCE	PLANNED ACTIVITIES/ TECHNIQUES (ALL PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE INVOLVED JOINTLY IN EACH SESSION)	REFLECTIONS AND JOURNALING	DATE AND TIME OF THE SESSION	PURPOSE OF PLANNED ACTIVITY	
Step 1	Orientation. Welcoming participants to the study. Signing of informed consent			15 to 30 July 2022, 09:00-18:00	To acquaint participants with the study. To outline the ethical issues involved such as confidentiality, limits to confidentiality, consent to partake in the study. To inform participants that psychological services would be arranged for those who experienced psychological distress due to this study.
Step 2	Administration of the CIP (Part 1, 2, 3 and 4)			30 July to 15 August 2022, 09:00-18:00	To gather valuable data from participants pertaining to their biographical information, career-related choices and influences, their chosen career categories, and career story narratives.
Step 3	Answering questions based on the theoretical framework that informs this study (Table 3.6). Reflecting on and narrating life story; revising the different sections of the CIP.			30 August 2022, 09:00-18:00	To consolidate participants' career narratives, based on the CIP and the theoretical framework that underlay this study.

Table 3.6

Questions asked on the last day of interviews based on the conceptual framework of this study

GENERAL QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What do you know about childhood abuse? ❖ In which ways has child abuse affected you? ❖ What strategies and methods of intervention do you believe are employed in schools to assist learners who are abused?
SOCIAL COGNITIVE CAREER THEORY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ In your life journey, who has had the most significant effect in terms of providing support to you?
SELF-EFFICACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ How do you deal with challenges and difficult situations? ❖ What lessons and teachings do you think could be valuable and useful to a learner who has been abused?
LOCUS OF CONTROL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What did this experience (childhood abuse) mean for you? ❖ What/who has kept you motivated to stay in school – from the time the abuse occurred up to this point in your life?

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

According to Braun and Clarke (2012, p. 52), thematic analysis “is a method used for analysing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyse and repeated patterns”. Nowell, Morris, White, et al. (2017, p. 2) suggest that thematic analysis “is a method used when seeking to understand the experiences, thoughts and behaviours in the data collected”. This method complemented the current study well, because the purpose of the study was to acquire deeper insight into the effects of childhood abuse on survivors’ academic attainment and resilience. The narrative responses offered by participants were analysed according to patterns and themes that emerged in a data set and enabled researchers to match answers with the research questions.

Conducting thematic analysis includes six steps (Kiger & Vapio, 2020). The six steps, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2012), are listed in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7

Six steps of conducting thematic analysis

STEPS	ACTION	DESCRIPTION OF STEPS AND RESPONSIBILITY OF THE RESEARCHER
Step 1	Becoming familiar with the data	This phase entailed reading and rereading the data set to obtain an in-depth knowledge of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). At this stage, the researcher made notes of her early impressions.
Step 2	Generating codes	Generating codes entailed organising the data systematically to create meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Initial coding grouped the volume of data into small portions of meaning (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).
Step 3	Searching for themes	This phase entailed identifying themes and subthemes within the data set. Braun and Clarke (2012) advise that making a theme map that talks about all the main themes and linked subthemes is an excellent way of recognising the link between them and identifying themes that need to be abandoned.
Step 4	Reviewing potential themes	This phase entailed going through all themes that had emerged and to organise them as new themes develop (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Reviewing themes ensured that all themes were identified, linked with one another and communicated a clear image of the data.
Step 5	Defining and naming themes	This phase involved defining as well as redefining the themes that emerged from the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Here the researcher defined the themes that emerged within the data set and also discussed what was peculiar and what not.
Step 6	Writing up and producing the report	In the final step, the researcher presented the themes and subthemes that emerged during the data-generating process. The study had to be presented in a concise and comprehensible manner and serve as a logical interpretation of the message carried across all themes.

Note: Adapted from “Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Data” by E. M. Kiger and L. Vapio, 2020, *Medical Teacher*, 131(4). Copyright 2020 by *Medical Teacher*.

An advantage of using thematic analysis is that it is the least complicated method of analysis in qualitative research (Kiger & Vapio, 2020). Thematic analysis is flexible and can be changed to suit many studies; yet it still provides a thick and comprehensive data set (Lowe et al., 2018). It is also useful for summarising important elements found in large amounts of data (Nowell et al., 2017). Owing to the above-mentioned advantages, thematic data

analysis was best suited for this study, and thus I chose to use the narrative biography research design.

A disadvantage of using thematic analysis is that flexibility can lead to irregularity and lack of rationality when formulating themes from data (Nowell et al., 2017). To overcome this challenge, researchers tend to follow the guidance of the Social Cognitive Theory and its components, as well as the interpretivist research paradigm to ensure that coherence and consistency are achieved. Another disadvantage is the lack of enough literature to direct researchers on how to conduct laborious thematic analysis (Kiger & Vapio, 2020).

Administration of the *Career Interest Profile (CIP)* (Maree, 2018) is usually completed in three distinguishable but overlapping phases. Phase 1 comprises eliciting the participant's life story (Maree, 2020a). The outcomes of the sessions are subsequently interpreted in relation to the presenting problem, and discrepancies between answers given in the sessions are clarified, after which the participant's career-life story is crafted by the counsellor (Maree, 2020a). Next, during Phase 2, the career counsellor reads each participant's career-life story verbatim back to them so they can validate the story and find advice from within (Maree, 2020b; Van Zyl, 2020). Together with the counsellor, the participants co-interpret their own life stories and themes based on the answers they give and observations made by the researcher (Van Zyl, 2020). During the third phase, the counsellor and participant jointly devise action plans and actually begin to enact these plans (Maree, 2020b; Van Zyl, 2020). Using the *CIP* helps participants to provide a more structured and coherent narrative of their childhood stories while at the same time linking childhood experiences with factors that have contributed to their resilience and academic attainment.

An advantage of using the *CIP* in my study was that the questions posed in it helped me and the participants to determine their influence (could possibly even be childhood abuse experiences) and resilience, as the questionnaire covered the participants' biographical, work and family influence questions (Maree, 2018). A disadvantage to using the *CIP* is that there is "no specific additional training [available] on how to use the questionnaire [other than regular CPD workshops presented by the developer]" (Maree, 2020b, p. 135). Maree (2020a) suggests that administrators of the questionnaire should administer the questionnaire on themselves before using the questionnaire on clients. In the case of my study, I acquainted myself with the questionnaire and self-administered it before using the questionnaire on participants.

The process of ensuring the rigour and transparency in coding and data analysis necessitates qualitative researchers to make use of an external coder to inject value into the data analysis and interpretation (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). It is also important to assess the degree of intercoder reliability to establish the credibility of the findings (MacPhail et al., 2015). Intercoder reliability offers assurance to the audience that the research results are accurate and can be confirmed (MacPhail et al., 2015). An external coder can confirm that the analysis and interpretation of the data is not affected by the subjective view of the researcher (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). In the current study, an external coder collaborated with the researcher and supervisor during the data analysis phase to ensure that the data was consistently coded. They also confirmed that the themes and subthemes identified were a truthful representation of the data and participants under study (MacPhail et al., 2015). The external coder was Dr Kudakwashe Christopher Muchena¹ (PhD), a research psychologist who obtained his doctorate at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. He is registered with the Allied Health Professions of Zimbabwe and serves as a senior lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe's psychology department.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

According to Cloutier and Ravasi (2021), the quality of data and the reporting of results can be severely influenced by the interviewer when research is conducted with human participants. It is therefore essential for a qualitative researcher to aim for credibility in their research (Stahl & King, 2020). In the present research, the researcher tried to establish credibility by applying four approaches detailed by Guba and Lincoln (1994). The strategies – credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Connelly, 2016) – are discussed below in relation to this study.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility pertains to the truthfulness of the study and research findings that mirror the views of participants under study (Connelly, 2016). In my study, three techniques were employed to ensure credibility. First, a triangulation of methods implied that data was obtained from multiple sources (Stahl & King, 2020). Second, member checks were made by submitting field notes and participants' responses back to them to validate (or invalidate) facts (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). Third, the researcher took reflective notes throughout the process (Daniel, 2019).

¹ Informed consent was obtained from the psychologist for the publication of his personal details.

3.8.2 Transferability

Transferability relates to whether or not the results and findings of one set can be applied to another setting (Nieuwenhuis, 2019). For this study, a complete description of participants, context, and research design was carefully considered as recommended by Connelly (2019). Furthermore, a careful selection (purposive sampling, as discussed in Chapter 2) was made of participants who represented the entire population in terms of the phenomenon or setting under study, to enhance transferability of the results.

3.8.3 Dependability

Dependability in qualitative research relates to the consistency of research findings over time (Stahl & King, 2021). To ensure dependability in the current study, I kept a process log of all notes, activities and decisions taken during the research process (Connelly, 2016). In addition, peer de-briefing and ongoing consultation with my supervisor took place during the process of data analysis (Daniel, 2019).

3.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the neutrality or degree to which findings are consistent and could be repeated (Connelly, 2016). Confirmability (also known as objectivity) stresses the need to ask if the findings of this study could be confirmed by another (De Vos et al., 2008). To adhere to this strategy, as the researcher I had peer debriefing discussions as well as discussions with my supervisor to avoid researcher bias (Nieuwenhuis, 2019).

3.8.5 Trustworthiness of the CIP

Since this study used the *CIP* as the primary method of data generation, specific strategies were followed that ensured the trustworthiness of the *CIP* (Makunja, 2022).

Table 3.8

Strategies used to ensure validity, trustworthiness, and credibility of the Career Interest Profile (CIP)

CRITERIA	STRATEGY	EXPLANATION
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged fieldwork and observation Member checks Triangulation Extensive literature review 	<p>To ensure a connection between the findings and participant reality and to boost validity, a long period of time was spent on several stages of information gathering and analysis.</p> <p>Local and international experts assessed the questionnaire, and their feedback was used to revise and explore for more inclusive meanings during interviews.</p> <p>To compare the findings, different researchers, sources and approaches were used.</p> <p>To ensure that the essential career-life narrative questions were included, the researcher conducted significant research on the topic of storied career counselling.</p>
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer examination Audit trail Triangulation 	<p>Participants were asked to affirm that the emerging results matched the data they had gathered.</p> <p>The researcher went into great depth on how the data had been gathered, how themes had been discovered, and how decisions had been made throughout the study.</p> <p>As previously stated, data was gathered from a variety of sources.</p>
Confirmability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant review and validation Avoidance of researcher bias 	<p>Participants were asked to examine the researcher's interviews and to double-check the information analysis throughout the procedure.</p> <p>The researcher made certain that the data gathered reflected the responses of the participants rather than her own point of view. She was wary of her own assumptions and misconceptions.</p>
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoidance of subjective interpretation Provision of a rich and thick description Avoidance of assumptions 	<p>During the analysis of research data, the researcher attempted to stay as objective as possible. To allow the reader to evaluate the findings, the researcher supplied sufficient information on the participants, including how they had been chosen, sample size (n=6), and the research context.</p> <p>Generalisations that went beyond the data's ability to support such statements were avoided.</p>

Note: Adapted from Strategies used to Ensure Validity, Trustworthiness, and Credibility of the Career Interest Profile (CIP).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research project was presented to the university's Research Ethics Committee for permission to conduct research. The resulting approval implied that rules and regulations had to be complied with regarding research with human participants (Brown et al., 2020). When studying human participants, especially vulnerable groups, the protection of the rights and well-being of participants is paramount (Gordon, 2020). An information document detailing the aims and purpose of the study was supplied to participants (Addendum A) and also explained verbally. Participants were asked to fill in a consent form as proof of their agreement to participate in this study and permission to the researcher to have the interviews recorded. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any adverse consequences. Their identity was protected as all recordings of the sessions were accessible to only the researcher and participants. A digital file of all data sets was created and protected with a password, and this file would be stored for a minimum of 10 years in the Head of Department's office after completion of the study. The researcher also kept all information shared during interview sessions confidential, as suggested by Gordon (2020).

Furthermore, the participants were ensured that no physical or psychological harm would be inflicted upon them. If such harm were to occur, the researcher undertook to make arrangements with a psychologist for further intervention and have a counsellor on standby.

3.9.1 Risks associated with this study.

The risks involved with this study included emotional distress due to the sensitivity of the topic. It was also anticipated that participants might re-experience trauma. In a case where psychological harm or distress were to occur, the participant would be debriefed, and the intervention would be terminated. Ms Constance Zitha,² who obtained her master's degree in clinical psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, was the psychologist who was on standby and who would be involved for further intervention (her details appear on the consent form).

3.9.2 Dealing with heinous discovery

The confidentiality clause that was upheld throughout the research process and that was communicated before the initial interviews with participants stated that all the information discussed during interviews would remain strictly between the participants and the

² Informed consent was obtained from the psychologist for the publication of her personal details.

researcher. In this study, the confidentiality promise was limited to non-criminal activities and to information about the participant that does not infringe on the rights of other human beings, and this was communicated to the participants before interviews (Finch & Fafinski, 2016). Therefore, if a participant chose to disclose having been involved in criminal activities such as murder or abusive behaviour towards children and other human beings, the confidentiality clause would be breached and sessions with the participant would be terminated. The rationale behind this was that this study dealt with resilience, academic attainment and learning about those who have become better people, despite their having a childhood abuse history. An ongoing consultation with my research supervisor and a member of the ethics committee was held on how best to handle any heinous discoveries (Finch & Fafinski, 2016).

3.10 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

According to Fleet et al. (2016), qualitative research seeks to gain insights into participants' thoughts and feelings which have the potential to provide a basis for a future quantitative study. Qualitative research also involves asking questions about the personal encounters of participants, which may bring back unpleasant and unsettling memories; therefore, the researcher fulfils the dual role of researcher and counsellor. To manage what Kitchener (1988) as cited in Fleet et al. (2016) called role conflict, I adhered to the following guidelines: providing clear information regarding the research project; ensuring that a good research alliance was established; practising self-reflexivity throughout the research project; and providing clear terms regarding confidentiality. Besides being the researcher, I took on a number of other roles. I accessed the feelings, emotions, and thoughts of research participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I also fostered a good relationship with participants to enable rich data generation and analysis and create a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Maree et al., 2019). I safeguarded participants and their data, and also ensured that permission to conduct research was granted by the research committee (Sutton & Austin, 2015). I prepared and structured interviews, assumed responsibility for data analysis and management, and arranged relevant resources for participants if they were to experience distress during the interview process. I examined my own biases, perspectives and background as these had the potential of influencing my view of the phenomenon being studied. I was responsible for the triangulation and crystallisation of data. Lastly, I took care to be a sensitive observer, I ensured that no harm was inflicted on participants, and I respected all participants.

3.11 SUMMARY

The nature of the study and the interpretive research paradigm that guided this study was discussed in this chapter. The research design and data generation methods were discussed first, followed by the data analysis. The approaches for interpreting the generated data were also explored. Next followed a discussion of how this study's quality was ensured, as well as how ethical issues were to be considered and handled. Lastly, my role as researcher in this study was outlined.

The results obtained in the study are addressed in Chapter 4.



CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of this study are presented in this Chapter. The following section discusses the context and provides a brief background on the participants in this study. An overview of the process (as carried out in ten sessions) is provided, followed by a description of the data generation and analysis process. A visual presentation and summary of the identified themes and subthemes are provided based on the sources. The chapter then finishes with a discussion of the findings.

4.2 CONTEXT

The participants in my study were recruited from flyers that were plugged at the University of Pretoria's Hatfield and Groenkloof campuses. A total of six participants showed interest in the study by contacting me on my phone and/or talking to me face to face. I provided consent forms to some electronically and some participants were given hard copies to sign. The consent form was clearly explained to the participants. They were given pseudo-names according to their preferred gender. The designated psychologist, Ms Constance Zita³, was also introduced to the participants upon first contact. The participants reviewed their answers to ensure that what they had written down was true and an honest reflection of their feelings. Since Covid-19 regulations had already been lifted, all the interviews were in person. The data-gathering process was objective⁴, and the researcher did not influence the way in which the participants were answering the study questions.

4.3 BRIEF BACKGROUND OF EACH PARTICIPANT

Participant 1

Gloria is a 22-year-old second-year Bachelor of Education Student at the University of Pretoria who hopes to be a dynamic teacher one day. At the age of 15, Gloria was sexually abused by a family member.

³ Informed consent was obtained from the psychologist for the publication of her personal details.

⁴ See Section 3.9 for more details.

Participant 2

Edward is a 35-year-old BEng Mechanical Engineering student at the University of Pretoria who wishes to be an engineer in the future. Edward was physically abused by a family member as a child.

Participant 3

Lucy is a 28-year-old Honours in Psychology student at the University of Pretoria who hopes to be an educational psychologist one day. Lucy was sexually abused by a cousin as a child.

Participant 4

Cliff is a 30-year-old male BEng Mechanical Engineering student at the University of Pretoria who wishes to be a wealthy engineer and own his own business one day. Cliff was physically and financially abused by his stepmother.

Participant 5

Suzzane is a 29-year-old Honours in Psychology student at the University of Pretoria who hopes to work as a clinical psychologist one day. Suzzane was physically and emotionally abused by a family member when she was a child.

Participant 6

Joe is a 37-year-old Business Management student at the University of Pretoria. He also wishes to run his own business as he wants to be his own boss. Joe was physically and verbally abused by a family member.

4.4 SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

All six people who participated in this study were survivors of various forms of childhood abuse. They were all enrolled at the University of Pretoria and were pursuing their education in varying fields – engineering, education, psychology, and business studies. Three males and three females were involved, and their ages ranged between 28 to 37, which equated to a mean age of 33 years. The participants differed in their level of education after high school. Table 4.1 provides a visual presentation of their biographic details.

Table 4.1

Summary of demographic information

PARTICIPANTS	GENDER	AGE (YEARS)	PARENTS' HIGHEST QUALIFICATIONS	HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION/ QUALIFICATION BEING PURSUED	FORM OF ABUSE EXPERIENCED
Gloria	Female	22	Mother holds a nursing diploma and father holds a matric certificate	Second year Bachelor of Education	Sexual abuse
Edward	male	35	Mother holds a Nursing diploma and father holds a Matric certificate	BEng Mechanical Engineering	Physical abuse
Lucy	Female	28	Both parents hold teaching diplomas	Honours degree in Psychology	Sexual abuse
Cliff	Male	30	Mother holds a diploma in education and father holds a grade 10 certificate	BEng Mechanical Engineering	Physical and Financial
Suzzanne	Female	29	Mother holds a matric certificate and father holds a carpentry certificate	Honours in Psychology	Verbal abuse
Joe	Male	30	Mother holds a matric certificate	Business Management degree	Physical and financial abuse

4.5 DATA-GENERATING METHOD AND PROCEDURE

As mentioned above, a total of six participants participated in the study. Data was gathered through interviews, and the participants' answers were recorded verbatim. Altogether ten interviews were conducted over a five-month period from June 2022 until October 2022. Some participants were able to complete the entire interview in one day, while in other cases

the interview was conducted over a period of two days. Each interview began with a description of the study and brief rapport building, and the participants were thanked in advance for partaking in the study. First, they were asked to share their demographic information, and this was followed by the questions in the interview guide to obtain background information pertaining to the childhood abuse. Once each interview was completed, the *CIP* was administered, and answers were recorded verbatim. I scanned the written transcripts before saving them to my drive and making them password protected. The average duration of each interview was approximately an hour.

Unforeseen deviations occurred in the data-gathering plan that was presented in Chapter 3. Firstly, a collective interview could not materialise due to the different schedules of participants, but to save time, participants were willing to meet and finish the entire data-gathering interview in one setting. The second unforeseen deviation was that many potential participants did not seem to show interest in the study, given its sensitivity. Two months after hanging up posters, there was still no interest. Participants were consequently recruited in the university's Computer Lab and bus shuttles by explaining to them the study as well as the benefits of being involved in the study. Thirdly, since Covid-19 regulations were now relaxed, all participants were able to meet and have the interview in person, thus saving on data fees related to online discussions.

Table 4.2

Summary of data generation steps

DATA GENERATION	PLANNED ACTIVITY	DATE OF SESSION	PURPOSE OF ACTIVITY
Step 1:	Welcoming the participants	01 July 2022 – 31 August 2022	Responding to interest
Step 2:	Explaining to participants more about the study and the ethical considerations related to the study	1 – 31 August 2022	Signing of consent forms and introduction of psychologist
Step 3:	Gathering of data	15 August 2022 – October 2022	Generation of data through the <i>CIP</i> questionnaire and asking of follow-up questions
Step 4:	Giving feedback on the responses provided by the participants	15 August 2022 – October 2022	Feedback session

4.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The data generated in this research was analysed according to the framework prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2012). The thematic data analysis method, a systematic approach employed to identify and structure data, allowed the researcher to gain insight into the patterns of meaning (represented as themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The responses to the questionnaire were verified after each interview and thereafter, themes and subthemes were generated. The analysis process was hand coded in accordance with the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2012).

An inductive analysis technique was employed for this study. According to Nowell et al. (2017), inductive analysis is a method of coding data that does not attempt to fit the information into an existing coding frame or to conform to the researcher's analytic notions. This type of thematic analysis is data driven. Five overarching or main themes with related subthemes consistently appeared in each category. Information provided by each participant contained valuable information. The main focus was on the parts of data that would explain or answer our research question thoroughly. Table 4.3 summarises the themes and subthemes that emerged from the two data sources.

Table 4.3

Summary of themes and subthemes

THEME	SUBTHEMES	CIP	QUESTIONNAIRE/ INTERVIEW
Support systems	Mother	X	X
	Parents ⁵	X	X
	Teachers	X	X
	Aunt		X
Self-efficacy	Belief in oneself	X	X
	Seeking external assistance	X	X
Lesson/teachings/ meaning making	Seeking support (resources)	X	X

⁵ The reason why mother and parents emerged as subthemes is that the participants had varying backgrounds. Some participants came from households where parental involvement and support were reported, while others came from households where only the mother was reported to be involved and supportive in their lives.

THEME	SUBTHEMES	CIP	QUESTIONNAIRE/ INTERVIEW
	Self-reliance	X	X
	Internal (self-motivation/determination)	X	X
Locus of control	External (Family and community)	X	X
	Parents	X	X
Motivation	Hopefulness	X	X
	Resilience	X	X

4.7 PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING THEMES

The data analysis process involves summarising the data gathered, based on significant themes and subthemes. Thematic analysis provides information about the meaning of patterns and helps the researcher to make sense of these meanings as they appear in the data gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The current study required continual switching between the data set and the coded data samples utilised for analysis. During data analysis, the different codes were categorised under probable themes by using the six phases of thematic analysis explained in Chapter 3. The applicable coded data extracts were grouped well within identified themes.

The main themes were those codes that were easiest to identify and that had the greatest amount of supporting data. The identified themes were also related to the literature review and to elements that were important in terms of answering the research question. Triangulation was crucial and overlapping themes had to be combined to avoid repetition and complexity. Triangulation was achieved by using two data sources as well as member checking to enhance the validity and credibility of findings.

According to Castro et al. (2010), a relatively small number of strong (distinct and clear) key (main) themes normally emerge from a sufficiently large data set. These themes (and subthemes) should reflect the views of more or less 20% of the responses, which explains a sufficiently large percentage of the variance between themes and subthemes. The themes that I identified were chosen due to their applicability to my study and also because they could potentially provide answers to the research question. After considering each theme's applicability in light of the entire data set, irrelevant information was ignored.

The data generated was reduced to specific themes and subthemes. The primary themes were:

- ❖ Support systems
- ❖ Self-efficacy
- ❖ Lessons/ meaning making
- ❖ Locus of control
- ❖ Motivation

4.8 IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF DATA

The coding system outlined below details the data source utilised and the matching participant response. Two data codes (A and B) were utilised to allow the reader easy access and understanding of the data source.

A – Interview (questionnaire)

B – The *CIP* intervention (different sections). Every section in the *CIP* yielded valuable information and responses of the participants, all significant to the data analysis process. The coding includes a number for the section description; for example, Family influence story, is denoted as B1 in the *CIP*.

The *CIP* consists of numerous sections and activities within a booklet. Coding example (B1;3;2;11): “*my parents encouraged me to study anything within the humanities faculty as they value people who work in the community*”. The first element of the code (B1) refers to data source B, section 1 (Family influence); 3 refers to the number of the participant; 2 refers to page number 2 in the *CIP*; and 11 indicates the line/section on which the response was given.

Table 4.4

Identifying sources of data and ascribed codes

DATA SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	PARTICIPANT NUMBER	PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER
Interview (Questionnaire) A	Answering of questions Discussions Reflections	1-6	1-2	1-9
CIP (sections) B	Section 1: (B1) Family life influences Section 2: (B2) Career-choice-related questions Section 3: (B3) Career category preferences Section 4: (B4) Career story narratives	1-6	1-8	1-74

4.9 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM THE CIP

4.9.1 Gloria's responses

Part 1: Biographical background and family influence

Gloria indicated that both her parents had achieved a Grade 12 level formal education. Her father was employed as a police constable, and her mother as a nurse. Both her parents had encouraged her to become a teacher because she would be valued by the community for her contribution. Gloria chose Life Orientation, English, and Business Studies as her three favourite subjects at school, while Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Afrikaans were her least preferred subjects.

Part 2: Career choice preferences

Career-choice-related questions were asked in this section. Gloria's career choice preferences, including the reasons for her choices, were ranked as follows:

PREFERRED CAREER CHOICE		MOTIVATION
1	Clinical psychologist	"...I love to help people with their problems...." (B2;1;3;29)
2	Educational psychologist	"...I also love working with children, and empowering them..."(B2;1;3;30)
3	Teacher	"...I enjoy being a teacher and it is what my parents always wanted for me"...(B2;1;3;31)
4	Lecturers	"...I enjoy being a teacher, I think it is because I know I am smart and can articulate myself clearly"...(B2;1;3;34)
5	Sports coach	"... I am a sporty person and have had experience especially in netball..."(B2;1;3;35)

Part 3: Career category preferences

Gloria's career category preferences were in line with her preferences in the previous section. She indicated social, caregiving and community services as her first preference. Her second preference was research, followed by sport, then information and communication technology, lastly practical-creative and consumer science (B3;1;4;38).

Part 4: Gloria's career story narrative

In this section, Gloria listed public speaking and self-reliance as some of her strengths (B4;1;6;40). Furthermore, she highlighted that her mother, Oprah Winfrey and Angie Diale were her three role models. Gloria's responses were as follows, "...I like Oprah because she built a school for girls in South Africa..."(B4;1;7;46). Second, "...my mother also inspires me because she was an amazing teacher..."(B4;1;7;47). Third, "...Mrs Angie Diale is a great social worker and is very good at her job..."(B4;1;7;48).

Gloria also reflected on the events that had occurred in her life and that influenced her. Having passed matric and seeing her family so proud of her, inspired her even more to reach her goals (B4;1;7;49). "... I had so many challenges, I did not believe I would pass..."(B4;1;7;49). Furthermore, Gloria mentioned "... I experienced sexual abuse and bullying..."(B4;1;7;72), and those were the challenges that she did not want others to go through.

4.9.2 Suzanne's responses

Part 1: Biographical information and family influence

Suzanne indicated that both her parents had completed Grade 12. Her father was a self-employed carpenter, and her mother worked as a cleaner. Suzanne admitted that her

parents did not encourage her to study anything post matric. She selected English, Geography and Physical Sciences as her three favourite subjects at school, and indicated that Mathematics and Siswati were her least preferred subjects.

Part 2: Career choice preferences

Career-choice-related questions were asked in this section. Suzanne's career choice preferences, including the reasons for her choices, were ranked as follows:

PREFERRED CAREER CHOICE		MOTIVATION
1	Psychology	"...I love making people feel better...." (B2;5;3;29)
2	Pharmacy	"...Loved physical science and doing experiments" (B2;5;3;30)
3	Architecture	"...I love beautiful drawings and buildings" (B2;5;3;31)
4	Social worker	"...I love to serve people" (B2;5;3;34)
5	Administrator	"I love being organised and working in the office" (B2;5;3;35)

Part 3: Career category preferences

Suzanne's career category preferences were in line with her preferences in the previous section. She chose social, caregiving and community services as her first preference. Her second preference was legal practices and security services, followed by research, then information and communication technology, and lastly, office-based administrative, clerical and organisational activities (B3;5;4;38).

Part 4: Career story narrative

In this section, Suzanne listed being hardworking, focused, organised and resilient, as well as showing perseverance and being humble as some of her strengths (B4;5;6;40). Furthermore, she highlighted that Kofi Anan, her grandmother and God were her three role models. Firstly, in her response she mentioned "Kofi Anan inspired me as a black person, he led the United Nations"(B4;2;7;46). Secondly, she wrote "my grandmother also inspires me because she loved me, and I felt it" (B4;5;7;47). Thirdly, she wrote that God has been her inspiration because "...God loves me unconditionally..."(B4;5;7;48).

When she reflected on the event/s that had occurred in her life and that influenced her, she mentioned "when my friend committed suicide..."(B4;5;7;49). According to Suzanne "... you never truly know what a person is feeling..."(B4;5;7;49). Furthermore, she mentioned "...I

experienced abuse, rejection and financial problems...”(B4;5;7;72), and those were the challenges that she did not want others to go through.

4.9.3 Lucy’s responses

Part 1: Biographical information and family influence

Lucy indicated that both her parents were qualified educators. She added that her parents had not encouraged her to study anything. Mathematics, Geography and Life Sciences were her three favourite subjects at school, whereas Afrikaans, English and Physical Science were her least preferred subjects.

Part 2: Career choice preferences

Career-choice-related questions were asked in this section. Lucy’s career choice preferences, including the reasons for her choices, were ranked as follows:

PREFERRED CAREER CHOICE		MOTIVATION
1	Clinical psychologist	“...I like working with people due to my experience of trauma....” (B2;3;3;29)
2	Doctor	“...I am interested in exploring the human body...”(B2;3;3;30)
3	Lawyer	“...I enjoy debating...” (B2;3;3;31)
4	Teacher	“...I like working with children” (B2;3;3;34)
5	Pilot	“... I am interested in flying aeroplanes...”(B2;3;3;35)

Part 3: Career category preferences

Lucy’s career category preferences were in line with her preferences in the previous section. She indicated social, caregiving and community services as her first preference. Her second preference was medical and paramedical services, followed by legal practice and security services, then research, and lastly, executive and management practice and arts and culture (B3;3;4;38).

Part 4: Lucy’s career story narrative

In this section Lucy listed public speaking, being open minded, creative, organised and self-motivated and taking initiative as some of her strengths (B4;3;6;40). She named her mother, Beyonce, and Mr Bean as her three role models. Firstly, “my mother is a strong woman who always wants to advance her skills...”(B4;3;7;46). Secondly, “...Beyonce also inspires me

because she is wealthy and seems to be family oriented...”(B4;3;7;47). Lastly, “Mr Bean inspires me with his sense of humour...”(B4;3;7;48).

In reflecting on the event/s that occurred in her life and influenced her, she indicated “...my grade 12 career guidance event and my childhood trauma...” (B4;3;7;49). According to Lucy, “... the motivational speaker during the career guidance event reminded me about the importance of believing in myself. Furthermore, my childhood trauma influenced me into pursuing a career in psychology...” (B4;3;7;49). Lucy added that she “... experienced sexual abuse, emotional abuse and bullying...” (B4;3;7;72), and those were the challenges that she did not want others to go through.

4.9.4 Cliff’s responses

Part 1: Biographical information and family influence

Cliff mentioned that his father’s highest qualification was Grade 10 while his mother held a diploma in teaching. He added that his parents encouraged him to study to become a dentist or an engineer. Mathematics, English and Physical Sciences were his three favourite subjects at school, whereas Afrikaans and Setswana were his least preferred subjects.

Part 2: Career choice preferences

Career-choice-related questions were asked in this section. Cliff’s career choice preferences including the reasons for his choices, were ranked as follows:

PREFERRED CAREER CHOICE		MOTIVATION
1	Lawyer	“...I would like to help people who can’t stand up for themselves/ I am good in arguing....” (B2;4;3;29)
2	Engineer	“...to solve/ improve mechanical problems...”(B2;4;3;30)
3	Doctor	“To help people while becoming rich...”(B2;4;3;31)
4	Businessman	“I would like to own my own companies later in life”...(B2;4;3;34)
5	Pilot	“I heard they make a lot of money and also travel the world...”(B2;4;3;35)

Part 3: Career category preferences

Cliff’s career category preferences were in line with his preferences in the previous section. He chose engineering and built environment as his first preference, while his second preference was practical-technical, followed by entrepreneurship, running and maintaining

a personal business, then legal practice and security services, and lastly, medical and paramedical services (B3;4;4;38).

Part 4: Career story narrative

In this section, Cliff listed public speaking, being open minded, helpful, creative, self-determining, trustworthy and respectful as some of his strengths (B4;4;6;40). Serena Williams, Elon Musk, and Patrice Motsepe were his three role models for the following reasons: “Serena Williams is good at what she does...”(B4;4;7;46); “...Elon Musk is wealthy and has a number of successful businesses ...”(B4;3;7;47); and “...Patrice Motsepe also inspires me to be as wealthy as him...”(B4;4;7;48).

In reflecting on the event/s that occurred in his life and that influenced him, he mentioned: “...being emotionally and financially abused ...”(B4;4;7;49). He stated, “... I now work hard not to suffer again, emotionally and financially, I don’t want my children to suffer like I did...” (B4;4;7;49). Furthermore, Cliff mentioned “... I experienced financial, physical and emotional abuse...” (B4;4;7;72), and those were the challenges that he did not want others to go through.

4.9.5 Edward’s responses

Part 1: Biographical information and family influence

Edward indicated that his father’s highest qualification was Standard 8, while his mother held a diploma in nursing. His parents did not encourage him to study anything, and it was his teacher who suggested that he pursue the field of Geology. Edward chose Mathematics, Geography and Physical Sciences as his three favourite subjects at school and stated that Afrikaans, English and Life Sciences were his least preferred subjects.

Part 2: Career choice preferences

Career-choice-related questions were asked in this section. Edward’s career choice preferences, including the reasons for his choices, were ranked as follows:

PREFERRED CAREER CHOICE		MOTIVATION
1	Farming	"...I enjoy nurturing without any disturbance..." (B2;2;3;29)
2	Mechanic	"...I enjoy fixing mechanical /electrical problems..."(B2;2;3;30)
3	Politician	"...I want to fix community issues..."(B2;2;3;31)
4	Truck driver	"...I enjoy road travel and seeing new places..."(B2;2;3;34)
5	Quality manager	"...I enjoy verifying the correctness of products..."(B2;2;3;35)

Part 3: Career category preferences

Edward's career category preferences were in line with his preferences as indicated in the previous section. He highlighted the field of engineering and built environment as his first preference and practical-technical as his second preference, followed by adventure, plants, animals, and the environment. Next was executive and management practices, followed by entrepreneurship, running and maintaining a personal business. Last in line was a preference for social, caregiving and community services (B3;2;4;38).

Part 4: Career story narrative

In this section Edward indicated that being a good collaborator, communicator, adviser and manager, as well as being humble, empathetic, kind and respectful were some of his strengths (B4;2;6;40). Furthermore, he named Bishop Lekganyane, his mother, and Patrice Motsepe as his three role models. First, "Bishop Lekganyane inspires me because he is able to lead millions of his church members with discipline..."(B4;2;7;46). Second, "...my mother raised me with patience and love..."(B4;2;7;47). Third, "...Patrice Motsepe also inspires because he uses his financial position to improve the world..."(B4;2;7;48).

Edward also reflected on the event/s that occurred in his life and that influenced him. His response was "...poverty and physical abuse and my mother ..." (B4;2;7;49). According to Edward "... my mother always encouraged me to do what is best for me without any pressure ..." (B4;2;7;49). Furthermore, Edward mentioned "... I experienced physical and emotional abuse and no psychological support ..." (B4;4;8;72), and therefore those were the challenges that he did not want others to go through.

4.9.6 Joe's responses

Part 1: Biographical information and family influence

Joe indicated that his mother's highest qualification was Grade 12. She worked as an administrator, and she was the one who encouraged him to be a medical doctor. Joe chose Biology, English and Accounting as his three favourite subjects at school, and indicated that Afrikaans, Mathematics and Sepedi were his least preferred subjects.

Part 2: Career choice preferences

Career-choice-related questions were asked in this section. Joe's career choice preferences including the reasons for his choices, were ranked as follows:

PREFERRED CAREER CHOICE		MOTIVATION
1	Lawyer	"...I would like to help people with their legal matters" (B2;6;3;29)
2	Psychologist	"...one of the interesting fields, I would like to help people liberate themselves from mental slavery..."(B2;6;3;30)
3	Medical doctor	"...It has always been my dream, however due to marks I had to reconsider..." (B2;6;3;31)
4	Teacher	"...I enjoy sharing information with people who need it"(B2;6;3;34)
5	Pharmacy	"...It is another field of medical studies that I enjoy ..."(B2;6;3;35)

Part 3: Career category preferences

Joe's career category preferences were in line with his preferences as indicated in the previous section. He chose legal and management practice as his first preference. His second preference was entrepreneurship, running and maintaining personal businesses, followed by social, caregiving and community services. Next were practical-creative and consumer sciences, research, and lastly, executive and management practice (B3;6;4;38).

Part 4: Career story narrative

Joe listed his main strengths as being a good adviser, hard worker, reliable, kind, intelligent, and respectful (B4;6;6;40). Furthermore, he indicated that Mr Tebogo Malatji, Elon Musk, and Mr Sibusiso Leope were his three role models. "Mr Tebogo Malatji inspires me because he is regarded as one of the best lawyers in the country and that is what I aspire to be..."(B4;6;7;46). Furthermore, "Elon Musk is very wealthy and has worked very hard, I like that he has a fighter spirit ..."(B4;6;7;47), and "...Mr Leope inspires me to never lose hope

no matter how tough life can get; his hustling spirit motivates me to stay focused...”(B4;6;7;48).

In reflecting on the event/s that occurred in his life and that influenced him, Joe said “...verbal and physical abuse by our mother as children ...” (B4;6;7;49). According to Joe “... my mother has always wanted my siblings and I to be better people ...”(B4;6;7;49). He added, “... I experienced physical and verbal abuse and no present father to teach me how to be a man...”(B4;6;8;72). Hence, those were the challenges that he did not want others to go through.

4.10 RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESPONSES

Table 4.5 presents the participants’ responses to the research questions posed. The responses recorded below exclude the biographical information of the participants, as this has already been dealt with at the beginning of this chapter.

Table 4.5

Summary of responses obtained from the questionnaire

PARTICIPANT	EXISTING STRATEGIES IN SCHOOL TO SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE	MAJOR INFLUENCE	APPRAISALS OF CHALLENGES (SELF-EFFICACY)	LOCUS OF CONTROL	TEACHINGS	MOTIVATION
Gloria	No strategies at my school (A;1;2;4).	Mother and aunt (A;1;2;5).	I write my problems down (journaling) and also talk to someone I trust (A;1;2;6).	I am observant of predators and also, I know my past does not define my future (A;1;2;8).	Learn to talk and report your abuser, no matter how close they are to your family (A;1;2;7).	My family and community (A;1;2;9).
Edward	No strategies at my school (A;2;2;4).	Mother (A;2;2;5).	I find the right approaches to deal with challenges. (A;2;2;6).	It taught me to be disciplined. (A;2;2;8).	To always seek professional help and counselling (A;2;2;7).	My self (A;2;2;9).
Lucy	School psychologists (A;3;2;4).	Parents (A;3;2;5).	I talk to family and my church pastor (A;3;2;6).	Influenced my career choice (A;3;2;8).	Talk to someone you trust (A;3;2;7).	My parents and also myself because I am goal orientated (A;3;2;9).

PARTICIPANT	EXISTING STRATEGIES IN SCHOOL TO SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE	MAJOR INFLUENCE	APPRAISALS OF CHALLENGES (SELF-EFFICACY)	LOCUS OF CONTROL	TEACHINGS	MOTIVATION
Cliff	No strategies (A;4;2;4).	My teacher (A;4;2;5).	I tell myself challenges are there to make me a better person (A;4;2;6).	To have better judgement of people (A;4;2;8).	Not to numb my pain but to talk about challenges (A;4;2;7).	My self and success (A;4;2;9).
Suzanne	No strategies (A;5;2;4).	God (A;5;2;5).	I try to confront them as maturely as I can (A;5;2;6).	My past does not define me (A;5;2;8).	Talk to someone you trust (A;5;2;7).	My education(A;5;2;9).
Joe	No strategies (A;6;2;4).	My mother (A;6;2;5).	I try to find solutions on my own and when I can't, I ask for help (A;6;2;6).	Do not let your past become your future (A;6;2;8).	Learn to seek help (A;6;2;7).	Success (A;6;2;9).

4.11 IDENTIFIED THEMES AND THEIR APPLICABILITY TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The themes generated and identified in the data set are important not only in describing the data, but also in addressing and answering the research question. The data set analysis attempted to address the following primary research question⁶.

Primary research question:

The main research question formulated for this study was: **What are the effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment and resilience of students?**

A combination of descriptive and explanatory questions asked on the last day of interviews, based on the theoretical framework of this study, is presented in Table 4.6⁷.

⁶ Themes were communicated and confirmed by the external examiner.

⁷ I purposely asked these questions after having administered the CIP. The rationale for my decision to only ask these questions after the CIP has been responded to is that I did not wish to influence the CIP responses of participants implicitly or explicitly.

Table 4.6

Questions asked on the last day of interviews based on the theoretical framework of this study

DESCRIPTIVE AND EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What do you know about childhood abuse? ❖ In what ways has child abuse affected you? ❖ What strategies and methods of intervention do you believe are employed in schools to assist learners who are abused?
SOCIAL COGNITIVE CAREER THEORY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Who has had the most significant effect in your life journey, in terms of providing support to you?
SELF-EFFICACY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ How do you deal with challenges and difficult situations? ❖ What lessons and teachings do you think could be valuable and useful to a learner who has been abused?
LOCUS OF CONTROL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What did this experience (childhood abuse) mean for you? ❖ What/who has kept you motivated to stay in school from the time the abuse occurred up to this point in your life?

All questions are linked to the conceptual framework that was detailed in Chapter 2. The identified themes that were related to the broad categories of the SCCT were also identified in the responses that participants provided to the *CIP* questionnaire. For example, locus of control and self-efficacy as facets of the SCCT explain that people with an internal locus of control and high self-efficacy (which is formed by experiences) have a higher sense of achievements than their counterparts (Niles & Harris-Bowlsbey, 2016). The career construction theory states that people find purpose in and through their career and use it as an opportunity to integrate into the community and make contributions to society (Maree, 2022).

A demonstration of how the two approaches communicated with one another is found in (B4;2;7;49) when Edward expressed “my mother *Mosima* had the biggest influence in my life”. He also expressed (in A4;2;2;5) how his mother supported him throughout the abuse experiences and his life to this day. These responses communicated to the researcher two perspectives. Firstly, from a career construction theory – which forms the basis of the CIP – Edward’s response suggests that his mother played a pivotal role in how he constructed his

own career. His life themes and interaction with society helped to shape his own values, attitudes, beliefs and career interests. Secondly, from a SCCT perspective, Edward's mother was a source of motivation for him. Her support consequently sparked his interest in certain career paths, leading to his high sense of self-efficacy in the field of engineering.

4.12 SUMMARY

Chapter provided the details of the data analysis results. To start with, it presented the contextual and background information of the participants. Data generation and analysis procedures were also outlined. The method that I utilised to identify themes and the procedure that I adopted to identify sources of data were discussed next. Thereafter, an extended summary of the responses obtained from the participants through the *CIP* intervention, as well as follow-up questions, was provided. A brief summary of the identified themes and their applicability to the conceptual framework concluded the chapter.



CHAPTER 5: RELATING MY FINDINGS TO EXISTING LITERATURE ON THE EFFECTS OF CHILDHOOD ABUSE ON THE ACADEMIC ATTAINMENT AND RESILIENCE OF STUDENTS

In an attempt to answer the various research questions, the themes highlighted in Chapter 4 are next discussed and triangulated. I focused on examining the findings and critically integrating them with the current literature by applying the following fourfold lens:

- I Do previous findings concur with my findings?
- II Which of my study's findings differ from previous findings?
- III Which of my findings have not been reported before?
- IV Which trends emerged from my findings?⁸

Qualitative approaches are used to address questions regarding experience, meaning and viewpoint – usually from the participant's perspective (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative research generates information based on human experience in order to provide meaningful and valuable results (Taylor et al., 2016) and the data obtained is typically not countable or measurable. The aim of this study was to determine the effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment of students. Below follows a comparison, a link, and interpretation of the study findings within the context of the available literature.

5.1 INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study relate to various aspects of the SCCT and the resilience theory that were discussed in Chapter 2.

5.1.1 Theme 1: Support systems

The study findings highlight the importance of having support structures and systems in place to counteract the severe adverse effects of childhood abuse. They emphasise the important role that teachers, parents, aunts and mothers (many participants are brought up by single mothers) play in the lives of children. The “support systems” theme confirms the findings of Butler et al. (2022) regarding the important contribution of family, school and peer

⁸ For various reasons, it is important to note that this chapter is intentionally concise. Firstly, guidelines and instructions from the Faculty and Department necessitated brevity. Secondly, despite our best efforts, the departmental librarian and I could locate only a limited number of relevant sources to connect with my study findings.

supportive relationships in protecting the mental wellbeing of children and adolescents who have faced adversity. Participants in my study all referred to their support structures as the pillars on which they could lean. The SCCT posits that individuals have some degree of agency or self-direction and that they face various factors, such as environmental support and barriers, that can either increase or impair their personal agency (Wang et al., 2022). At the time of my study, all participants were pursuing their chosen career trajectories at the University of Pretoria, which I considered as an indicator of them having a level of personal agency. Personal agency was enhanced by the participants' support structures. Although Fishbach (2022) suggests that social support decreases the personal agency of individuals, participants in this study demonstrated how social support and personal agency complemented – rather than worked against – each other. Participants also demonstrated the importance of having support systems in place, especially for children who suffered abuse, to act as a buffer against the negative consequences of childhood abuse.

5.1.2 Theme 2: Self-efficacy

In the previous chapters, self-efficacy was defined as the confidence that people have in their ability to learn and carry out tasks at designated levels (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020). According to Alexandra (2016), self-efficacy is a crucial component in predicting the successes of individuals. The foundation of self-efficacy is the idea that a person's perception of their capacity to engage in a specific action and achieve a particular result depends on the social support and positive reinforcement they enjoy (Bandura, 1989). The responses of participants in my study aligned with Bandura's (1989) theory, as they reported that their self-reliance, belief and confidence came as a result of the backing that they received from their support systems. Participants confirmed that it is through self-efficacy that they managed to continue with school and progress well. Self-reliance and seeking support emerged as subthemes, as participants held that both their self-belief and seeking assistance had a positive impact on their overall sense of self-efficacy. Furthermore, they confirmed that the two variables are/were equally important in their career choices, their academic attainment and their wellbeing. Based on their study, Fong et al. (2023) argue that seeking academic help is linked to achievement. Their study speaks specifically on academic help seeking and how it is linked to better academic performance and progress. Thus, they confirm the importance of seeking support – even in academics – to enhance self-efficacy, which then improves academic performance and progress. Fong et al. (2023) confirm that self-efficacy is an important factor that contributes to the success and academic achievement of participants.

5.1.3 Theme 3: Meaning making

Meaning making refers to the process through which individuals or communities find or create a sense of purpose, significance, or understanding in the face of adversity, trauma, or challenging circumstances (Park, 2022). According to Hakkim and Deb (2021), meaning making is considered a key component of resilience because it can contribute to a person's ability to bounce back from difficult situations and adapt positively to adversity. Their study on the resilience of young adults who experienced abuse in childhood found that meaning-making processes resulted in a positive adjustment to life in adulthood (Hakkim & Deb, 2021). These findings were confirmed by the participants in my study who demonstrated meaning making in how they narrated their life stories. Through the *CIP*, the participants were making sense of what had happened, they managed to understand the causes and consequences of their childhood experiences, and they integrated these experiences into their life stories.

Establishing ways to see negative situations more positively, focusing on the positive aspects of an event, and constantly reminding oneself of its advantages are meaning-making techniques (Park, 2022). Participants in my study demonstrated meaning-making processes by choosing to strive for academic success despite their having suffered childhood abuse. They were motivated by their own successes and employed intra-psychological skills such as self-belief, confidence, and strong self-efficacy. When they examined the protective factors of early career construction in professionals, Turner and Holdsworth (2023) found that intra-psychological skills were equally as important in developing resilience and played a pivotal role in the career construction and transition of participants. Their findings are confirmed by the findings in my study. It should be noted, though, that Turner and Holdsworth's (2023) study mainly targeted new professionals and adjustment to the workforce; they emphasised the importance of intra-psychological skills in the development of resilience (Turner & Holdsworth, 2023).

The *CIP* intervention assisted participants in creating meaning around their life stories, as the intervention itself fostered narratability and provided participants with personal insight into and a realisation of the major life themes that influence their career choices and life decisions. A study conducted by Ramasubramanian et al. (2022), which was aimed at investigating the influence of narrative themes on resilience and life outcomes, found that interventions during their data-generating process that fostered narratability improved resilience in participants. These findings align positively with the findings of my study, although the authors used a different method of intervention for their study. Furthermore,

participants in my study also demonstrated their meaning-making processes by volunteering to contribute to this study, adding to the body of knowledge surrounding childhood abuse, and sharing the factors that have helped them up to this point in their lives.

Tripplert et al. (2013) found that childhood experiences of childhood abuse do not have a substantial impact on the decision to pursue a career in human services. They found that survivors of childhood abuse who pursued the human services to seek justice for or make meaning of their experiences were less likely to re-experience abuse as adults than those who do not seek meaning making by choosing careers in human services. However, the findings of my study refuted the findings of Tripplert et al. (2013). Participants in my study mentioned that their childhood abuse had a definite impact on their chosen field of study. Bryce et al. (2023) found that participants who had had adverse childhood experiences were more likely to pursue careers in the helping professions. When I examined the career choices of participants in my study, I found that the career fields they have chosen are more people-centred and linked to the helping professions, which emphasises their desire to make a positive difference in the world. This observation confirms the findings of Bryce et al. (2023), who argue that the likelihood of pursuing careers in the helping professions was enhanced by adverse experiences as well as experiential motivators.

In summary, the studies mentioned under this theme highlight the role of meaning-making techniques and intra-psychological skills, the importance of interventions promoting narratability, and the impact of childhood abuse on career choice and resilience among individuals who experienced childhood abuse.

5.1.4 Theme 4: Locus of control

As defined in Chapter 2, locus of control pertains to the degree of control that individuals perceive they have over their circumstances and the outcomes resulting from their actions (Koboyashi & Farrington, 2020). The findings of my study suggest that participants exhibited an internal locus of control regarding how they were approaching life's challenges. They asserted that they did not allow their past to hinder their future. This perspective aligns positively with the SCCT concept of locus of control. Scholars such as Brown and Lent (2013) argue that successful and determined individuals often possess an internal locus of control (and not an external locus of control).

Tyler et al. (2020) discovered in their research that having an internal locus of control is associated with self-control, as well as related notions such as autonomy, motivation, free will, and personal agency. These concepts collectively contribute to an individual's capacity

to exert control over their own life circumstances (Tyler et al., 2020). My findings align with the findings of Tyler et al. (2020) as participants demonstrated their relentless drive and motivation to succeed academically. This drive empowered participants to make choices in line with their own preferences and to take action without feeling constrained. Brown and Lent (2013) contended that individuals with an internal locus of control exercise personal agency over their lives and actions, which is closely associated with self-efficacy – as confirmed by participants in my study.

My findings also support the findings of a study conducted by Hamzah and Othman (2023), who confirmed the existence of a link between an internal locus of control and personal and career success. The authors posited that individuals with an internal locus of control, when confronted with challenges and obstacles, tend to view them as opportunities for learning and personal growth, rather than as mere hindrances – which is what participants in my study demonstrated through their responses (Hamzah & Othman, 2023).

5.1.5 Theme 5: Motivation

The “motivation” theme emerged as the researcher reflected on the data set. The latter guided the researcher to examine the role of hope, seeking support, and personal agency in the resilience and academic attainment of the participants. Masten (2014) asserted that hope is also an indicator of resilience. This assertion links up with the findings of my study, as the emerged themes underline participants’ hope for success in achieving their individual goals and their reliance on support systems. A study that aligns closely with the assertion of Masten (2014) and also with my findings is a research investigation by Rands et al. (2020) who explored the relationship between hope and optimism as factors that can forecast both academic achievement and an overall sense of well-being among college students. Their findings indicated a clear association between hope, optimism, academic performance, and subjective well-being in the student population (Rands et al., 2020). Although subjective wellbeing was not explored in great detail during the interview and intervention stages in my study, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation played a positive role in my participants’ education. Their positive mindsets, persistence, and goal-oriented attitudes served as buffers against hopelessness. This mindset strengthened their hope and determination to succeed, and also motivated them to take proactive steps toward self-improvement, thus confirming the findings of Rands et al. (2020).

In contrast, Beutel et al. (2017) believe that individuals who experienced childhood abuse are prone to psychosocial disorders that prevent them from achieving a good quality of life.

Makondo and Dlamini (2017) agree and suggest that children who have been abused often drop out of school due to absenteeism, lack of concentration, and various other factors. Although these findings have merit, neither Beutel et al. (2017) nor Makondo and Dlamini's (2017) findings were confirmed by the results of my study, which revealed more positivity than negativity among survivors of childhood abuse.

5.2 REVISITING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK THAT SUPPORTS THIS STUDY

The concepts that informed this study were the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and its facet, the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). These two theories provided the researcher with a framework to examine important factors that influence the academic attainment, resilience and career-related decisions of students who are survivors of childhood abuse.

Employing the lens of self-efficacy helped me to understand the various influences that played a role in the participants' lives, while employing the lens of locus of control aided me in comprehending the motivational processes and influences affecting the participants. The Career Interest Profile (*CIP*) questionnaire served both as a data-generating method and as an intervention strategy designed to enhance resilience in participants.

The themes that emerged from the intervention showed that participants possessed a strong sense of self-efficacy in their career choices, and they were propelled by their internal drive for success. Additionally, participants illustrated the importance of internal locus of control and their support structures, both of which fuelled their motivation and educational attainment. All of these factors align with the conceptual framework of this study.

Based on the participants' responses, the concept of resilience was also evident, as they openly shared their life stories in a coherent manner. This sharing was hoped to benefit other children who might encounter adverse childhood experiences similar to theirs.

5.3 SUMMARY

Chapter 5 detailed the research study's findings and their interpretation. The researcher addressed the findings from the data set and connected them with the literature examined in Chapter 2. In the next chapter, the research questions will be revisited based on the study's findings. Chapter 6 also suggests recommendations for future research and discusses the limits of present studies.



CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes my inquiry. I present a brief overview of the study report along with a discussion of the associated results in relation to the primary and secondary research topics. Lastly, potential limitations of my study and recommendations for future research are discussed.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

6.2.1 Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter presented a concise summary of the research. It began with a review of the literature on trends and the latest literature on childhood abuse and resilience. A discussion followed on the rationale of the study, which was to understand the effects of childhood abuse on academic attainment and resilience of students at the University of Pretoria. The core research topic and its sub-questions were then discussed. An explanation of the fundamental concepts followed, and the chapter concluded with a discussion of the study's methodological designs and ethical issues.

6.2.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 contained an in-depth review of the literature relating to important aspects of the study. The researcher focused on resilience, childhood abuse, education, and educational attainment. Gaps in the literature as well as previous studies on related topics were identified, and the chapter concluded by suggesting a conceptual framework for the study.

6.2.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 3 dealt with the methodology used in this study, which was qualitative in nature and employed the interpretive paradigm. The researcher went on to explain data collection, analysis, as well as interpretation methodologies and procedures. The chapter concluded with a thorough explanation of the ethical issues and quality standards that contributed to the credibility of my study.

6.2.4 Chapter 4: Research results

The research results and findings were given in Chapter 4. The numerous activities that were undertaken throughout the study sessions were explained, as well as the techniques

that were applied for identifying themes and subthemes. The researcher also linked her findings with the currently available literature.

6.2.5 Chapter 5: Relating my findings to existing literature on the effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment and resilience of students.

Chapter 5 related the findings of my study to (co)existing literature about the effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment and resilience of students. The results and a link between findings and the conceptual framework were also interpreted and discussed.

6.3 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The descriptive and exploratory questions formulated for this study were outlined in Section 1.5. The discussion in this section serves to answer these research questions based on the findings of my study.

6.3.1 Descriptive questions

6.3.1.1 What are the characteristics of childhood abuse?

The term "childhood abuse" encompasses a wide range of maltreatment and harm that children may experience during their formative years, and it has profound implications for their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being (Beutel et al., 2017). As described in Chapter 2 of the publication, Childline South Africa (2020), participants experienced forms of abuse that included the following:

- ❖ Physical abuse, where force was intentionally used to cause bodily injury.
- ❖ Emotional or psychological abuse, which involved tactics to manipulate, belittle, or cause humiliation.
- ❖ Sexual abuse, which covered non-consensual sexual activity.
- ❖ Neglect, where caregivers failed to provide in children's essential physical, emotional, or educational needs.
- ❖ Financial abuse, which involved the limitation, exploitation and withholding of access to money and other resources such as food and clothes.

6.3.1.2 What psychological interventions are implemented in schools to help children cope with childhood abuse?

Five out of the six participants mentioned that they received psychological intervention from school following abuse, while the other relied on the support of family (mother/aunt or both parents), teachers and God. Legislation and policies as well as NGOs have been

established in a bid to protect and intervene whenever there are reports of childhood abuse. However, in a country like South Africa where there is inequality, many children in especially rural areas have no access to such intervention services. The process of reporting and receiving assistance proves to be a lengthy and costly one.

Many psychologists prefer employing crisis intervention in schools when there is suspicion or discovery of pupil abuse. Organisations such as Childline and Child Welfare are funded either independently or by donors, some of which collaborate closely with local schools to offer trauma counselling and support to victims and their families. Despite the presence of such organisations, the scarcity of school psychologists, inadequate funding, and insufficient training of educators are major contributors to the lack of effective crisis intervention in our schools (SACAP, 2020). The data obtained from the participants revealed that professional help is important and that the biopsychosocial, intrinsic and extrinsic factors are just as important in combatting the negative long-term effects of childhood abuse.

6.3.2 Exploratory questions

6.3.2.1 How did the participants experience childhood abuse?

Participants experienced various types of abuse as outlined in Chapter 2. Participants overcame physical, sexual, verbal, economic and emotional abuse⁹.

6.3.2.2 How was participants' motivation to stay in school influenced by their experience of childhood abuse?

Intrinsic Factors

Internal locus of control/Resilience: A belief in their ability to control their destiny and achieve their academic goals (Tyler et al., 2020) empowered survivors to persevere despite past trauma. Resilience in the face of setbacks or failures helped survivors view challenges as opportunities for growth (Turner & Holdsworth, 2023), and this encouraged them to keep striving for academic success.

Self-efficacy: High levels of self-efficacy or belief in their own capabilities (Fong et al., 2023) enabled survivors to set ambitious academic goals and persist in their efforts to achieve them.

⁹ A summary of demographic and background information can be found in Table 4.1.

Goal setting/Hope: Setting specific and challenging academic goals (that build hope) and nurturing the belief that they have the power to achieve them, motivated survivors to work diligently toward their objectives.

Extrinsic Factors

Agency: Participants took responsibility for their actions and believed in the impact of their efforts. This enabled them to plan effectively, make sound decisions, and work toward academic attainment.

Support systems: Participants' positive relationships and support from friends, family, and teachers were instrumental in their resilience and motivation to pursue academic success.

Sense of purpose/Meaning making: Participants found meaning in their childhood experiences, which gave them a sense of purpose. The latter was evident in their wanting to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding childhood abuse.

Career aspirations: Participants' career choices aligned with their values, beliefs, and a desire to help others (purpose), which served as a powerful motivator for them. Participants' career choices also reinforced their commitment to academic success.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

The aim of this research was to contribute to the body of knowledge pertaining to childhood abuse and also to explore factors that contributed to participants' resilience and academic attainment. As previously mentioned, the factors that contributed to the resilience of participants were found to be both intrinsic and extrinsic. The findings of my research can be useful for teachers, families and school psychologists, and they can be used to render better programmes and services for survivors. Training programmes can be prepared for parents, teachers, and the community on how to intervene with survivors of childhood abuse to overcome their negative experiences.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Qualitative research inquiries often face credibility and truthfulness concerns. While my study participants' responses to questions were verified for truthfulness and credibility, it is possible that their responses might change slightly if they were again subjected to a similar inquiry at a later time. Another potential limitation concerned the language used during interviews and interventions. None of the participants were first-language speakers of English, which was the medium of communication throughout the research process.

Translating their responses from their mother tongue to English might have altered the true meaning of their experiences.

Participants expressed their interest in participating in the study in August through to October, a period known for academic pressure. As a result, the sincerity and depth of their responses may have been influenced by the academic pressure they were under. Researcher bias constituted a further potential limitation. I had earlier researched the available knowledge on this topic, and upon reflecting on the data generation process, I recalled moments when I had to step back and understand the participants' responses without letting my assumptions and expectations cloud my judgement. The lack of diversity among the participants was also a limitation, and it would have been interesting to compare how individuals from different ethnic backgrounds overcame childhood abuse.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Researchers should in future consider conducting longitudinal studies to explore the long-term effects of childhood abuse on students' academic attainment and resilience. This would provide a better understanding of how these effects evolve over time, thus informing interventions and support strategies that extend into adulthood. Furthermore, researchers should investigate different types of childhood abuse, how each type affects children's well-being, and whether well-being impacts their resilience and academic performance. Utilising the ACES questionnaire could also be beneficial to assess the severity of the impact of childhood abuse on children and to determine whether coping strategies vary according to the severity of the abuse.

6.7 PERSONAL REFLECTION

Reflecting on the process of writing has left me overwhelmed by various emotions. It's hard to believe that this journey has come to an end. I'm somewhat numb because it hasn't been an easy road. Throughout this process, my own experiences and emotions played a significant role, not only in how I experienced the journey, but also in reshaping my views about life and its complexities.

In Chapter 1, I detailed the rationale behind my decision to embark on this study. I explained the origins of my initial interest in the chosen topic. My background as an addiction counsellor and my experience of working with abused children were the main reasons why I chose this enquiry. I wanted to intervene with children and adults who are survivors of childhood abuse in the most effective way possible. This inquiry was also a personal one because my late mother shared her own story of abuse as an orphan, which compelled me

to seek answers. Unfortunately, due to the lack of the factors that we uncovered in the findings, the effects of abuse manifested physically and mentally in my mother until her demise. At some point, I considered changing my topic because it hit so close to home. However, I knew there were more reasons why I had to continue this inquiry. Nonetheless, if I ever decide to embark on another research project, I will certainly consider the advice of experienced scholars in choosing a topic that is less personal because that can significantly impact the researcher's motivation and emotions.

This journey has also made me realise how much of an advocate I have become for children's well-being and my duty to keep them as healthy as possible, despite any adversity they might face. My awareness and knowledge of the biology behind most physical and mental illnesses have grown. I have also come to understand the measures that can be put in place to prevent such illnesses. Coping with the new roles of a working mother, fiancé and student were also really hard to balance. However, as time went by, I started to master the art of balance. This process was tiring and demanding because I naturally prefer to concentrate on one role at a time so as to ensure that I fulfil it to my utmost best.

Midway through the research, I realised that most of my findings had already been documented. The subjective well-being of participants was not thoroughly assessed for me to confidently say my data would be sufficient to answer the research questions. This made me contemplate starting over and including another scientific tool in the conceptual framework to better understand the depth and extent of the abuse. During those times, I had to trust the process and rely on the expertise, support, guidance, and encouragement of my supervisor. I believe I have learned and grown immensely during this period.

6.8 CONCLUSION

Existing research indicates that childhood abuse can cause psychological and physical illnesses among survivors. In childhood, children become vulnerable because they have not yet developed effective coping mechanisms to deal with such experiences. Globally, scholars, doctors, teachers and therapists aim to prevent childhood abuse, but it seems that efforts are not sufficient to combat this heinous pandemic.

The future of every country depends on how well its children are protected and cared for. Therefore, it remains everyone's duty to preserve the innocence, mental health, physical well-being, and overall wellness of children. Participants in my study shed light on the factors that contributed to their resilience and academic achievement, and it appeared that evidence-based interventions are effective in addressing the negative effects of childhood

abuse. I therefore remain committed to raising awareness and intervening in the most effective way, as I want to be part of the solution and eradicate the problem of childhood abuse.



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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

ICD 5

**PARTICIPANT’S INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR AN
INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW RESEARCH STUDY**

Study title: The effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment and resilience of students

Principal Investigator: Ms Matsie Racheku

Supervisor: Prof. J.G. Maree

Institution: University of Pretoria

Psychologist on call: Constance Zita (0638843442/ 0673288185)

DAYTIME AND AFTER-HOURS TELEPHONE NUMBER(S):

Daytime number/s: 0736975702

After-hours number: 0736975702

DATE AND TIME OF FIRST INFORMED CONSENT DISCUSSION:

			:
Date	month	Year	Time

Dear Mr / Mrs

1) INTRODUCTION

You are invited to volunteer for a research study. I am doing this research for MEd (Educational Psychology) degree purposes at the University of Pretoria. This document gives information about

the study to help you decide if you would like to participate. Before you agree to take part, you should fully understand what is involved. If you have any questions that are not fully explained in this document, do not hesitate to ask the researcher. You should not agree to take part unless you are completely happy with what we will be discussing during the interview.

2) THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore some of the factors that have contributed to the academic attainment and resilience of survivors of childhood abuse. In addition, the researcher wishes to learn more about how survivors (especially children) can be empowered and supported to reach their full potential in the face of adversity. The findings of this study could potentially be helpful to learners who have been exposed to childhood abuse in the sense that childcare workers, teachers, and parents will be equipped with support strategies and interventions that can be used to mitigate the negative effects of abuse. You will be interviewed by the researcher in a place that is private and easy for you to reach.

3) EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES AND WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM THE PARTICIPANT

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview which will take about 30-60 minutes. The individual interview will be a one-on-one/ virtual meeting with the researcher. The researcher will ask you several questions about the research topic. This study involves answering some questions such as the effects of childhood abuse on the academic attainment of students. If you agree, the interview will be recorded on a recording device to ensure that no information is missed.

4) RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED?

During the interview you may find that some questions are sensitive, for instance, questions about childhood abuse experiences. There are also some questions about things that have happened to you in the past, and this may bring back sad or fearful memories. If you feel that a question feels too personal or makes you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer such a question. If you need psychological support or counselling during or after the interview, the researcher will be able to refer you to a Clinical Psychologist on standby for further intervention; her details are on the first page of this document.

5) POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

You will not benefit directly from being part of this study, but your participation is important for us to better understand factors that contribute to the academic attainment and resilience of students. The information you give may help the researcher contribute to knowledge in the field of childhood abuse research.

6) COMPENSATION

You will not be paid to take part in the study. However, any cost you have because of taking part in the study, such as transport costs will be paid back to you (reimbursed).

7) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The decision to take part in the study is yours and yours alone. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. You can also stop participating at any time during the interview without giving a reason. If you refuse to take part in the study, this will not affect you in any way.

8) ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria (telephone number 012 420 5656) and written approval has been granted by that committee.

9) INFORMATION ON WHOM TO CONTACT

If you have any questions about this study, you should contact:

Ms Matsie Racheke on 0736975702 or alternatively by email: missracheke1@gmail.com

10) CONFIDENTIALITY

The researcher will not record your name anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be linked to a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (another name) and we will refer to you in this way in the data, any publication, report or other research output.

All records from this study will be regarded as confidential. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the Research Ethics Committee. All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential. Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. All hard copy information will be stored at the Research data management repository portal at the University of Pretoria, for a minimum of 15 years, and only the research team will have access to this information.

11) CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

- ❖ I confirm that the person requesting my consent to take part in this study has told me about the nature, process, possible risks or discomforts, and the benefits of the study.
- ❖ I have received, read, and understood the above written information about the study.
- ❖ I have had adequate time to ask questions and I have no objections to participate in this study.

- ❖ I am aware that the information obtained in the study, including personal details, will be anonymously processed and presented in the reporting of results.
- ❖ I understand that I will not be penalised in any way should I wish to stop taking part in the study and my withdrawal will not affect my treatment and care.
- ❖ If photos are taken, they may only be used after I have seen them and agreed that they may be anonymised and used.
- ❖ I am participating willingly.
- ❖ I have received a signed copy of this informed consent agreement.

Participant's name (Please print)

Date

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's name (Please print)

Date

Researcher's signature

Date



APPENDIX B: A LETTER FROM EXTERNAL CODER



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11 November 2022

EXTERNAL CODER'S CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

I hereby confirm that I acted as the external coder for the thesis of Ms Matsie Mary Racheku. I reviewed and verified her data analysis and concur with her findings. I believe that the themes and subthemes as identified in the study, were reported accurately

Dr Kudakwashe Muchena
Registered Research Psychologist



APPENDIX C: RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIVE NOTES

Resuming My Dissertation

Experiences of Abuse: I have worked with abused children for close to a year and since then I have been curious on how the abuse will affect them as adults. During outreaches, workshops and having other people share their experiences of physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse stirred strong emotions in me. This reaction was because I knew the personal stories of people close to me who had similar experiences. Their stories highlighted the harsh realities faced by children of all genders, leading me to contemplate the profound human suffering caused by childhood abuse and violence. I recognised the link between childhood abuse and long-term negative consequences on health underscores the importance of comprehensively addressing this issue.

Literature Review

Exploring Conflicting Perspectives: Engaging with various pieces of literature, I encountered conflicting views on the lasting effects of childhood abuse. Some scholars took a deterministic perspective, suggesting inevitable adverse effects, while others emphasized the resilience of many survivors. The diverse nature of the literature posed a challenge as I sifted through an abundance of relevant material. Selecting and summarizing this information consumed considerable time, revealing the complexities in my study.

Methodology

With the guide by my supervisor, the choice of a qualitative approach proved justifiable in understanding survivors' experiences. Employing a collective case study design with elements of narrative biography seemed appropriate, providing a nuanced and contextualized understanding of participants' journeys. The purposive sampling method added depth, ensuring diverse stories were captured.

Data Generating

Challenges and Successes: Data generation proved the most challenging aspect, requiring engagement with students in the library and school shuttle to recruit all six participants. My data generation was towards exam season, which is usually met with, heightened emotions. Despite the challenges, the process went smoothly, and participants did not report distress during our sessions.

Data Analysis

Navigating Challenges: The data analysis phase posed significant challenges. I found myself slowing down, taking breaks, and rewriting Chapter 4 multiple times before feeling a sense of progress. The external coder played a crucial role. I was constantly questioning if participants were coping “outside school”, I reminded myself of the research role, avoiding turning sessions into therapy. The Career Interest Profile (CIP) aided participants in reflecting on their lives, rewriting their life stories, and formulating their own meaning in their experiences.



APPENDIX D: EXTRACT FROM TRANSCRIPTS

The table below represents the interview transcripts where the initial themes and subthemes are indicated through different colours

The themes were derived from both the *CIP* and general questions deriving from the conceptual framework of my study.

PARTICIPANT NUMBER	INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT	INITIAL THEMES AND SUBTHEMES
Questions posed: Q1. Who has had the most significant effect on your life journey, in terms of providing support to you? Q2. What events/people have influenced me most in my life so far?		
Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ My Mother and aunt have always been there for me, they have supported me up to this day. They are my pillars (A;1;2;5). ❖ When I passed my matric my parents were so super proud of me, it was then I decided to strive for more to attain my goals. (B4:1:7:49) 	Perceived support systems: Mother and Aunt
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ My mother was my support, we have been through a lot together(A:2:2:5). ❖ She always encourages me to do what is best for me without any pressure((B4:2:7:49) 	Perceived support systems: Mother
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ My parents were my biggest supporter. (A: 3:2:5). ❖ A motivational speaker also had an influence in my life during our matric year(B4:3:7:49) 	Perceived support systems: Parents
Questions posed. Q1. How do you deal with challenges and difficult situations Q2. What kind of a leader do you want to be and why?		
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I want to be a leader who can learn from other people because I am open-minded and always willing to learn. (B4:3:7:61) 	Perceived self-efficacy: Self-belief

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I write my problems down; I journal quite a lot which clears my mind. 	
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I find the right approaches to deal with challenges. (A;2;2;6). ❖ I would like to be a leader who is reliable and listens to all people despite their background or community status. (B4:2:7:61) 	Self-belief
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I try to confront challenges as maturely as I can (A;5;2;6) ❖ I would like to be a leader who enables others confidence in others and remain humble. (B4:5:7:61) 	Perceived self-efficacy: Self-belief
<p>Question posed. Q1: What is your dream career?</p>		
Participant 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ People come to me to ask for help with relationship problems, Gender-based abuse and educational guidance. (B4:3:8:68) 	Meaning-making: translating experiences to purpose
Participant 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Informed consent: Participant willingly volunteered to be part of the study. ❖ I really want to be an educational psychologist (B2:1:3:37) 	Meaning-making/ resilience/hope
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Informed consent: Participant willingly volunteered to be part of the study. ❖ I aspire to be a Farmer, who specializes in livestock and crops, I am good at it (B2:2:3:37) 	Meaning-making/ resilience/hope
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Informed consent: Participant willingly volunteered to be part of the study. ❖ I wish to be an Engineer and also have my own Engineering Company. (B2:4:3:37) 	Meaning-making/ resilience/hope
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Informed consent: Participant willingly volunteered to be part of the study. 	Meaning making/ resilience

<p>Participant 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Informed consent: Participant willingly volunteered to be part of the study. ❖ My dream career is to be a clinical psychologist as I am interested in studying human behaviors, I was exposed to trauma at a young age, so that's where my passion lies (Helping people through my experiences). (B2:3:3:37) 	<p>Meaning making/ resilience/ translating experiences to purpose</p>
<p>Questions posed. Q1. What did this experience (childhood abuse) mean for you? Q2. What have been your three biggest successes?</p>		
<p>Participant 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am observant of predators and also, have come to understand that my past does not define my future (A;1;2;8). ❖ My biggest achievement was to pass matric and getting accepted at university (B4:1:8:66) 	<p>Locus of control: Internal locus of control/self-motivation</p>
<p>Participant 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ It taught me to be disciplined. (A;2;2;8). ❖ My biggest achievement was starting a family and learning how to fix cars (B4:2:8:66) 	<p>Internal locus of control</p>
<p>Participant 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ My experiences Influenced my career choice, I would like to empower people to take charge of their mental health and their lives (A;3;2;8). ❖ My biggest achievement to date is finishing high school and dealing with my childhood trauma. (B4:3:2:66) 	<p>Internal locus of control/self-motivation</p>
<p>Participant 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ My past does not define me (A;5;2;8). ❖ So far, my biggest achievements have been my education, mental health progress and improved relationship with God. (B4:5:2:66) 	<p>Internal locus of control</p>

Questions posed.		
Q1. What/ who has kept you motivated to stay in school from the time the abuse occurred up to this point in your life?		
Q2. What are your three favourite mottoes/quotations?		
Participant 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I'm driven by myself and my high need for success (A;4;2;9). ❖ My favorite mottoes are :Time wasted is never regained, Never give up, Pray until something happens 	Motivation: Internal
Participant 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ What motivates me is My education(A;5;2;9). ❖ The mottoes that I live by are: Do good, keep going, it will be okay 	Motivation: Internal and External
Participant 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I am driven by success (A;6;2;9) ❖ The mottoes I live by are "develop success from failures". "We cannot solve problems with the same kind of thinking we employed when we came up with them". (B4:6:7:62) 	Motivation: Internal
Participant 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I'm driven by myself (A;2;2;9). ❖ I live by the moto the sky is the limit (B4:2:7:62) 	Motivation: Internal

