

**Educational resilience of township youth raised by
grandparents**

Lindiwe Sandisile Shole

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Educational resilience of township youth raised by grandparents

by

Lindiwe Sandisile Shole

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(EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY)

Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria

SUPERVISOR:

Prof. M.R. MAMPANE

PRETORIA

2017

DECLARATION

“I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree Magister Educationis in Learning Support Guidance and Counselling 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.”

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate and understand ways in which the family, school, and community environments contribute to the academic resilience of township youth raised by their grandparents. The study further aimed to identify and understand the support structures that facilitate academic achievement from the participant's perspectives. A Constructivism, qualitative case study design was utilised and the study was underpinned by a theoretical framework that integrated concepts of the ecological systems theory of human development to examine the interactive relationship between the participants and their social environment.

The findings from this study revealed that protective factors across different contexts of the participants' lives contributed to their academic success despite adversity. The support of grandparents of the participants was perceived to have had the greatest impact on their academic success. Other protective factors revealed were peer influences and peer support as participants relied on each other in areas that required their safety, including relationships with school teachers and individual strengths. The risk factors that were identified were family conflicts, lack of a quiet place to study in the home environment. Lack of additional academic support, corporal punishment and sexual harassment were identified as risk factors within the school environment. From the community environment, neighbourhood disorganisation and crime emerged as risk factors.

Based on the findings of the study, I can therefore conclude that the educational resilience of township youth raised by grandparents depends on the availability of protective factors in their environment, individual strengths and their ability to identify and use resources that could assist them to overcome the adversities they experience

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Resilience
- Educational resilience
- Youth
- Township
- Grandparents

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DinamiCom Communications CC Registration no: 2011/027616/23
Postnet Suite 120, Private Bag X10, Elarduspark, 0047
M: +27 (0)83 378 6136 E: diana@dinamicom.co.za
Managing Member: Diana Rabie

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CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Many grandparents are parenting their grandchildren due to various reasons caused by changes in family structure and social conditions. Literature suggests that this is a worldwide trend (Carr, Hayslip & Gray, 2012; Harnett, Dawe & Russell, 2014; Kelly, Whitley & Campos, 2013). There are numerous reasons that lead children to live with their grandparents. According to Mudavanhu (2008) poverty, substance abuse, increasing frequencies of divorce and single parenting, homelessness, and the parent living with or marrying someone else are major factors responsible for the rise in grandparent headed households. Hayslip, Shore, Henderson and Lambert (1998) found that grandparents raise their grandchildren for several reasons such as helping their adult child in times of crisis, being the only relative willing to take care of the grandchildren, to believing they can provide better care than the parents. Grandchildren come to live with their grandparents through various ways, including child welfare agency, informal arrangement, legal guardianship or adoption because of one or a combination of the aforementioned circumstances (Messing, 2006).

Historically, grandparents have often voluntarily been an alternative source of support when birth parents were unable to care for their children. Many grandparents feel obligated to raise their grandchildren because of the biological connection, an opportunity to continue their family lineage and be a positive force in their grandchildren's lives (Minkler, Fuller-Thomson, Miller & Driver, 2000). Grandparents may be legal guardians or members of the extended family with a responsibility to take care of their grandchild or grandchildren. Storm and Storm (2011) report that for some custodial grandparents, the idea of becoming parents again is gratifying, whereas others do not desire to become second time parents to their grandchildren.

Literacy levels of many of the grandparents raising their grandchildren could leave them frustrated when dealing with their grandchildren's school-related activities,

including homework (Mudavanhu, Segalo & Fourie, 2008). According to Mansfield (2009) the grandparents' literacy level, socio-economic status and occupation might prevent them from effectively dealing with the school (Mansfield, 2009). Literature suggests that some custodial children experience emotional and/or behavioural problems and other school-related functioning (Edwards & Mumford, 2005; Dent & Cameron, 2003).

Given the array of challenges in the grandparent caregiver situation, most grandchildren may live in poverty and may have experienced traumatic loss or have been taken away from their parents. These factors can be stressful and may positively or negatively affect their educational trajectory and also influence their relationships with family, teachers and community members.

Many youths in South Africa live in black-only townships emanating from the previous policy of separate development according to the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Motseke, 2010). The township environment contains many risk factors that may become key barriers to learning, development and wellbeing. According to Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Othman, Kwong, Armstrong and Gilgun (2007) the social environment of an individual is important in their resilience process (Ungar et al, 2007). Despite challenges and frustrations, one can safely say that learners and youths raised in grandparent-headed households are able to seek stability amid family changes. They have an ability to adapt to different family forms and understand why these families work at various times and in different places (Gasa & Plaatjies, 2013).

Little is understood about the environmental factors that promote the academic resilience in learners from low socio-economic backgrounds (Richman, Bowen & Woolley, 2004). Teachers may understand how learners from safe, favourable neighbourhoods and stable families are able to succeed academically. This study seeks to understand how learners living in townships, under adverse circumstances and without a support system, cope academically in school. The learner's own explanation of how they cope with adversity may help teachers identify aspects of resilience most relevant to their learner's resilience and help them accordingly.

Schools that promote resilience emphasise academic competence and excellence, encourage learners to develop a sense of purpose, autonomy and efficacy, promote a culture of teaching and learning, and promote a sense of belonging (Mampane,

2004). The building of educational resilience in the school environment plays a significant role in the improvement of academic outcome in vulnerable learners (Waxman, Padron & Gray, 2004). Teachers have limited input at community and family level, but can alter educational practices in the classroom to ensure that the specific needs of learners, identified as being at risk of academic failure, are addressed. Educational processes can be responsive to the diverse learning challenges influenced by external social factors (Donald, Lazarus, & Lolwana, 2010).

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION

Which resilience contributory factors are essential for the academic success of township learners raised by grandparents?

1.2.2 SECONDARY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research question is unpacked to contain the following subquestions:

(a) Which protective factors (family, community and school) do township youth raised by grandparents attribute to their academic success?

(b) Which risk factors do township youth raised by grandparents experience in their developmental environment (family, community and school)?

1.3 RATIONALE FOR STUDY

The rationale for this study arose from my experience of working at a school situated in an informal settlement of Mamelodi Township. The school is in an area which is characterised by poverty, unemployment of parents, substance abuse, violence, a high rate of parental deaths, shacks (lack of infrastructure), and a lot of taverns.

Many learners are raised by grandparents and some are not doing well academically. There are no school-based resilience programmes to address the special needs of these learners. It is paramount to make existing resources available and to assist learners and families who need protection from multiple risk factors they are exposed to, to promote resilience and wellness.

MacDonald and Validivieso (2000) state that environments facilitate resilience when they provide motivation, strategic support and developmental opportunities to children and youth. For learners, important environments are their microsystems – family, school and community.

The school environment is a prime area for fostering resilience and learners' academic success (Rosen, Glennie, Dalton, Lennon & Bozick, 2010). Muller (2001) suggests that a nurturing school climate and supportive teacher-learner relationships enhance academic benefits for learners. Furthermore, Mirowsky and Ross (2003) state that schools should focus attention on making resources available that children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds do not have. This may help improve their academic achievement and position in the education system.

According to Henderson and Milstein (2003), teachers are instrumental in establishing environments that promote resilience in learners. They suggest that teachers can promote learners' academic resilience by recognising, valuing and nurturing their abilities and potential. Fostering resilience also involves helping learners to believe in themselves and teaching them to take responsibility for their own academic success (Henderson & Milstein, 2003).

1.4 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Considering the above, the purpose of this study is to investigate and gain insight in the manner in which family, community and school environments contribute to the academic resilience of township learners raised by grandparents. The study examines the environmental factors that facilitate academic resilience. The aim is to identify support structures in their environments that promote academic success from the learners' perspective.

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS

I approached the study with the following assumptions:

- Academically successful learners are resilient.

- Specific protective factors at home, school and in the community, contribute to learners' academic success and resilience.
- Learners are exposed to more adversity as a result of being raised in an informal settlement township and in a grandparent-headed family.

1.6 LITERATURE STUDY

Relevant information from literature on educational resilience was reviewed to highlight some of the prominent concepts and terms relating to the subject. The social profile of youths in South Africa, challenges facing youths in grandparent-headed families, a brief history of resilience research, issues in defining resilience, the development of educational resilience, what educational resilience is, the international perspective on educational resilience, the South African perspective on educational resilience and risk, and protective factors in educational resilience are the concepts that are discussed in detail in the literature review in Chapter 2.

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: The ecological systems theory of human development

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) formed the theoretical basis for this research. According to Lewthwaite, McMillan and Renaud (2011), Bronfenbrenner's theory considers the multi-system factors in the environment that influence child development and it appears there is an inseparable link between educational development and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Lewthwaite, et al., 2011). I have used the ecological framework to identify environmental factors and individual characteristics that contribute to learners' developmental outcomes, including historical, broader social and cultural forces (Fraser, Kirby & Smokowski, 2004).

I have discussed the details of the ecological systems theoretical framework in Chapter 2.

1.8 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVE

1.8.1 Constructivist paradigm

The decision to utilise a constructivist paradigm was based on my understanding that resilience is a complex and context-specific phenomenon that had different meaning for those involved. The decision was further supported by literature which suggested the compatibility of constructivist research and social research (Bryman, 2012).

According to Creswell (2013) constructivist researchers pay attention to the manner in which individuals interact with one another and concentrate on clearly defined contexts in which people reside and work to interpret the cultural and historical settings of their subjects.

Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) suggest that to acquire an understanding about human perceptions, the inter-relationship between the researcher and participant is essential in the co-construction of meaning. Furthermore, the outcomes of research studies using a constructivist paradigm are constructed from participants' perspectives as shared and interpreted with the researcher during the research process (Charmaz, 2014).

1.8.2 Research methodology

Qualitative data make an important contribution to the understanding of the construct of resilience. It is suited for the identification of protective factors available to research participants and provide enough context of the situation that is studied in specific contexts (Ungar, 2006).

This study seeks to investigate ways in which the family, school and community environments contribute to the academic resilience of township youth raised by grandparents. A qualitative method will provide the process to obtain answers to questions about the selected participants, what their lives are like and how they see the world (Creswell, 2013) with respect to how they overcome adversity and achieve academic success. The study assumes a description rather than an explanation.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN

Merriam (2009) states that, for a case study approach, a particular group of subjects that is a bounded system can be selected based on typicality. A case study allows a focus on the interpretation of the participants' interactions so that significant characteristics can be uncovered, providing a rich and thick description of a particular phenomenon (Bless, Higson, Smith & Kagee, 2006).

In this study, the phenomenon is academic success and resilience of youth raised by their grandparents. By using a case study approach, multiple data gathering techniques were used to explore the research topic. This enabled me to get a full description of the participants' experiences and perspectives on factors that influence their resilience.

1.10 RESEARCH CONTEXT: Mamelodi Township

The participants of this study are youths from Mamelodi Township and all come from informal settlements. They attend school in the township. Mamelodi township is situated on the north-eastern outskirts of Pretoria with a population of about one million (Gottsmann, 2009). Many people live in small brick houses, inherited from the apartheid government's housing scheme. There are also huge informal settlements where people had built their own shacks made from corrugated iron – a phenomenon characteristic of the democratic government since 1994. Mamelodi is densely populated with large areas of informal settlements.

The legacy of apartheid is responsible for leaving townships with poverty, a high unemployment rate and deficient education, including a range of socio-economic problems (Buthelezi, Alexander & Seabi, 2009). South African youths who live in townships are faced with barriers to their education, such as poverty, parental absence, lack of role models and the context and environment of the education system (Watson, 2010). Most township schools are dysfunctional and are characterised by incompetent school management, high rate of teacher absenteeism, poor physical resources and weak teacher content knowledge (Evoh & Mafu, 2007).

1.10.1 Selection of case and participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling. This method is used when the population of interest is difficult to access or unusual. Participants were selected based on specified characteristics in relation to the research purpose of this study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Maree, 2007). The sampling approaches employed in this study are snowball and criterion sampling. This will be explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.11 DATA COLLECTION AND DOCUMENTATION

A demographic questionnaire was used to assess participants' information, including residence, current grade, sex and age. Based on this information, participants were selected and student profiles were created for quality assurance and to ensure that information-rich participants were selected.

In-depth interviews uncovered loaded data that allowed me to understand the phenomena surrounding the contributory factors that are essential for the academic success of township learners raised by their grandparents. Likewise, the in-depth interviews allowed participants to expound on their experiences.

An interview guide was used to provide thematic focus during interviews (Patton, 2002). Interviews were recorded and transcribed to capture the essence of each interview. It was anticipated that this approach would generate rich and highly illuminating data to understand the experiences of resilient learners. Field notes were used to record what participants said and did (gestures, facial expressions and body language).

1.12 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

For this study, I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis. The method involves reading the participant's response numerous times, with each reading focussing on the narrator's experience and the emerging themes. The audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed verbatim. This approach allowed for the development of themes based on the raw data, rather than my preconceptions or a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Prasad, 2005; Yin, 2009).

1.13 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

To ensure the integrity of the study, the following factors were employed: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability.

To ensure credibility, different data sources such as interviews, school progress reports, field notes and demographic data were used for triangulation (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Merriam, 2002; Prasad, 2005; Yin, 2009). Member checks were conducted by providing participants with a copy of their interview transcript to verify the accuracy of the content. I described the study sufficiently to allow the reader to decide how the findings of this study may be transferred to similar studies (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Schwandt, 2007; Shenton, 2004). Research methods and processes were described in detail through proper documentation and an audit trail (Schwandt, 2007). Data and interpretation of the findings were derived from collected data (Tobin & Begley, 2004). Conformability was enhanced by stating my assumptions and study limitations (Shenton, 2004).

1.14 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To address ethical considerations, I complied with the regulations stipulated in the University of Pretoria's code of ethics for research. Permission to conduct research at the Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room was sought from the centre manager. The research site was left undisturbed and the interview sessions did not disrupt the flow of activities of the centre and participants (Creswell, 2003). According to Rubin and Babbie (2005) some of the most important ethical agreements that should be respected in social research are: informed consent and voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, and protection from harm.

Voluntary participation: The reason, type and procedure of the study were explained to participants. They were also informed of their right to voluntary participation in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Creswell, 2003). Guardians of learners were asked for their consent for the learners to participate in the study by signing consent forms and learners were also requested to sign assent forms prior to the start of the research.

Anonymity and confidentiality: To protect the anonymity of participants, pseudo names were used and data that could reveal their identity was removed. The limitation of confidentiality was also explained to them (Babbie & Mouton, 2004; Creswell, 2003).

Protection from harm: Participants were treated with respect and dignity and were not exposed to any psychological or physical harm. If there were incidents of exposure and potential harm to participants, I would have referred them for specialised help (Rubin & Babbie, 2005).

These ethical issues are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.15 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

1.15.1 Resilience

In this study, resilience refers to the ability of individuals to find their way to health promoting resources and the ability of their social, cultural and physical resources to facilitate their wellbeing in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008; Ungar & Liebenberg, 2011). This definition reflects the perspective that resilience processes are promoted by culture and context-specific activities between individuals and their social ecologies to foster positive adjustment in the face of adversity.

Social ecologies could facilitate an individual's resilience by providing resources and the individual could actively seek and make use of health promoting resources available in their social ecologies (Ungar, 2004, 2008).

1.15.2 Educational resilience

Educational resilience is defined as the capacity to overcome acute and/or chronic adversity, caused by poverty, health and other social conditions (Waxman, Gray & Padron, 2003) that could be a major threat to a learner's educational development (Martin, 2013). Educational resilience/academic resilience are used interchangeably throughout this study.

1.15.3 Youth

The term youth is sometimes interchangeably referred to as adolescence (Spence, 2005). The definition of youth/adolescent is fluid and can vary between countries and regions (Laser-Maira & Nicotera, 2011). According to The South African National Youth Policy (2009–2014), youth refers to those falling within the age group of 14–35 years. For the purposes of this study, youth will be defined as those individuals falling within a school going age of 13–18 years. The age range chosen is relevant as this study's enquiry includes schooling. Youth/adolescent are used interchangeably throughout this study.

1.15.4 Township

The term township refers to an underdeveloped urban residential area that was reserved for Blacks, Coloureds and Indians by the apartheid government under statutes such as the Native Act of 1923 and the Group Areas Act of 1950 (Motseke, 2010). Townships are characterised by high unemployment, few community facilities, low household incomes, and poverty (Pernegger & Godehart, 2007).

1.15.5 Grandparents

Grandparent(s) is a term denoting the parent(s) of a person's mother or father, invoking a relationship across three generations of a family (Ribbens-McCarthy & Edwards, 2011).

1.16 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

- ❖ **Chapter 1** provides the background information and an overview of the study, the research questions, statement of purpose, rationale of the study, assumptions, literature study, theoretical framework, paradigmatic perspective, research design, data collection and documentation, data analysis and interpretation, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, clarification of terms and a programme of study.

- ❖ **Chapter 2** reviews the literature related to answering the research questions and discusses the social profile of South African youth, key issues of grandparent households in the field of resilience and educational resilience research. It concludes with the theoretical framework that underpins this study.
- ❖ **Chapter 3** describes the research process in detail, including a comprehensive description of the ethical tenets undertaken to ensure quality research.
- ❖ **Chapter 4** set forth findings that emerged from interviews according to various themes, sub-themes and categories supported by literature.
- ❖ **Chapter 5** summarises the research findings in relation to existing literature, answers the research questions and addresses the assumptions of the study. It furthermore provides the limitations and recommendations for future research, a final conclusion and personal reflection.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of resilience investigates the abilities of individuals, families, and ecological protective factors that influence vulnerable children and youth (Ungar, 2008). Resilience occurs in the presence of adversity for a child to be identified resilient. Furthermore, resilience as an outcome is influenced by an individual's environment, the proclivity to utilise health-enhancing resources available, and the reciprocal action between the individual and the social ecologies that will determine the positive outcomes experienced (Ungar, 2006).

Masten (2001) posits that resilient children are identified by their competence in performing developmental tasks. Even in the most difficult circumstances, there are some children who not only survive, but actually thrive. An understanding why some children have the capacity to withstand severe contextual stressors and risks to their development, while others do not, will help to determine how educators can intervene to help prevent the negative consequences of stressors and risks.

2.2 THE SOCIAL PROFILE OF YOUTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to Statistics South Africa (2012) education is an important requirement for youths to have access to good job opportunities and participate in the economy of the country. After the age of 16 many youths start to drop out of the education system. The report indicates that by the age of 18, more than 70% of youths are still in school, but by the age of 24, fewer than 10% are left in school (Stats SA, 2012). Hardships experienced by children and youth worldwide are diverse in their intensity, manifestation and sources, and have the potential to disrupt normal child development (Noltemeyer & Bush, 2013).

In 2012, over 54% of children were living in poor families with 31% living with unemployed adults. About two million children lived in backyard rooms, shacks and informal settlements with 75% living in overcrowded households. Seventy-five per cent of children lived in formal housing (Stats SA).

Theron and Theron (2014) cite UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report, which states that children are at risk of negative developmental outcomes due to parental discourse, divorce, violence, disability, traumatic experiences, HIV/AIDS and ill health. Due to a lack of parental presence, there is an increasing reliance on grandparents as caregivers (Ardington & Leibbrandt, 2010). According to the 2012 General Household Survey by Stats SA almost 60% of black African senior citizens reside in low-income households. With these grim statistics, for a youth to navigate the academic ladder can be challenging, especially youth raised by their grandparents.

2.3 CHALLENGES IN GRANDPARENT-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

One of the many family structures that are prevalent is the grandparent-headed family structure without a parent present. In most cases the grandparent(s) is the sole provider and the primary caregiver of the grandchildren. Grandparents then resume the role of parenting for which they may be unprepared (Cox, 2008), compelling them to redevelop their parenting skills, learn about current parenting practices, childhood disorders and child development (Doblin-MacNab, 2006). They rarely assume this role under pleasant circumstances and the impact of this role can be challenging for the grandparent and the child (Park, 2009). Furthermore, they are frequently tasked with the responsibility of caring for their grandchildren when they are at a pensionable age (Dunn & Parry-Williams, 2008). In addition, grandparents may depend on a state pension for an income and may be unable to provide for the basic needs of their grandchildren, resulting in poverty (Cross & Day, 2008; Gasa, 2012; Szolnoki & Cahn, 2002).

Grandparents may suffer from insomnia, depression, hypertension, diabetes and/or other ailments (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2008). These ailments may affect their ability to provide optimal care for their grandchildren (Cox, 2008). They may also have trouble understanding the current requirements of schools and the current curriculum (Edwards & Sweeney, 2007). Grandparents who raise their grandchildren endure high levels of emotional stress and increased psychological distress (Butler & Copeland, 2007; Carr, 2008). These stresses include confusion about parenting a new generation whose cultural norms and values are different from their own (Kolomer, 2008).

2.4 ADVANTAGES OF GRANDPARENT HOUSEHOLDS

Although grandparent caregiving can be overwhelming, it can be beneficial for both grandparents and grandchildren (Sands, Goldberg-Glen & Thorton, 2005). Some grandparents are positively affected by their chance at raising their grandchildren and appreciate the love and happiness they share with their grandchildren (Dunne & Kettler, 2007). As primary caregivers for their grandchildren, grandparents can create the opportunity to become role models for their grandchildren (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2008). In addition, they have an opportunity to pass on traditions and family history, stories, memories and their wisdom to their grandchildren (Bailey, 2012).

Dunifon (2013) states that grandparents can have a positive influence on their grandchildren through their interactions with them. They can discuss appropriate behaviour with them, encourage academic success and other successes, provide advice, help with homework and provide emotional support (Dunifon, 2013). The most crucial factor is that grandparents as caregivers can provide security and structure for their grandchildren, who might otherwise be in foster care (Hayslip & Kaminski, 2008).

2.5 CHALLENGES FACING YOUTHS RAISED BY GRANDPARENTS

The family structure and the environment in which a child is brought up determine the financial and psychological factors significant for raising a child (Ruiz & Silverstein, 2007). Grandparent-headed households are one of the family structures that are prevalent in South Africa. The HIV/Aids epidemic has led to an enormous increase in the number of grandparent-headed households (Mturi, Sekokotla, Nzimande, Xaba, & Dungumaro, 2005).

Children and youth raised by grandparents may live in poor households where the only income could be the grandparent's pension (Gasa, 2012). Literature suggests that poverty is the most crippling risk factor that places children and youth at high risk for negative developmental outcomes and can impair their sense of safety and security (Dass-Brailsford, 2005). Poverty can lead to poor domestic circumstances where there are overcrowding, lack of space to do homework, lack of books, an unstimulating learning environment, low parental education, limited resources and poor nutrition. These factors reduce the probability of poor families investing in education (UNESCO, 2006).

Previous research demonstrated that some children growing up under adverse conditions have the capacity to develop positive outcomes than their peers who are in the same situation (Garmezy, 1971; Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000; Wenner & Smith, 1989). Although poverty can lead to less educational attainment, this research does not focus on this aspect, but rather on the factors that promote educational resilience for youths raised by grandparents in townships.

2.6 RESILIENCE

2.6.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF RESILIENCE RESEARCH

Major voices in resilience research include Norman Garmezy (1971), and Werner & Smith (1989). In their well-cited influential study in Kauai Hawaii, Werner and Smith (1989) studied a large sample of youths for over three decades. Many from this sample were born into chronic poverty and many of the parents involved had less than eight years' education. Some of these parents had either physical handicaps or showed signs of psychopathology, including substance abuse. About one third of the children of this sample possessed four or more risk factors, which included family instability, low socio-economic status, poor emotional support within the family, and little educational stimulation. Most of the children they studied had dispositional factors and had supportive relationships with their families and in the community. The environmental factors that protected the children were the small size of the family, family cohesion to deal with their problems, the intergenerational network within the family and friends. The children were able to link instrumental and emotional support available to them as they navigated to independence and competence.

Garmezy, Masten and Tellegen (1984) undertook a 10-year study of learners from disadvantaged areas in America. They investigated the impact of stressful life conditions on school competence. The results revealed that many participants were competent, achieved academic success and did not display behavioural problems.

Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston and Smith (1979) studied children on the Isle of Wight who were reared by parents with mental illness. The findings of the study revealed that there were individual characteristics and environmental factors that served as protective factors for these children. The protective factors that emerged from the children were characteristics such as intelligence and good personality traits.

The school was characterised by strategies to improve their learners' personal growth, encouraging social relationships with peers and caring teachers

Luthar and Barkin investigated the wellbeing of affluent Grade 11 and 12 learners. They investigated substance use, anxiety and rule breaking across three geographically diverse samples of over 900 youths. The results revealed that youths from two samples had elevated substance use and the other group had high levels of internalising and externalising symptoms and low levels of substance use. Parents' awareness of their children's extracurricular activities after school, parents' containment of substance use and positive parent-child relationships were found to be risk modifying factors in this sample (Luthar & Barkin, 2012).

Theron and Theron (2014) did a study on education services and resilience processes of 16 Black South African university students who has shown resilience. They reported that education services were the only formal services that contributed significantly in their lives while navigating the effect of poverty during their childhood and youth. Education services supported resilience processes and were characterised by supportive teachers who saw potential in the students, gave students money out of their own pockets, and formed connections with the youth and community. When education services were obstructive to resilience processes, they were characterised by non-caring teachers who made the youths feel inferior and did not help them to adjust to hardships (Theron & Theron, 2014).

2.6.2. ISSUES IN DEFINING RESILIENCE AND EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE

2.6.2.1 *Resilience*

There is no consensus on a definition of resilience in research literature and many definitions of this complex concept exist.

According to Masten (2014), Resilience can be defined as the ability of a system to resist or bounce back from serious disturbances that threaten its ability to adapt, work successfully or develop.

Rutter refers to resilience as the finding that some individuals fare better psychologically despite being exposed to adversities that would be expected to bring

about negative developmental outcomes (Rutter, 2006). They fare better than the other individuals exposed to the same experiences (Rutter, 2013).

Ungar (2008) states that in the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental or both, resilience is both the ability of individuals to find their way to available resources and opportunities that support them physically, mentally or both and a state of the individual's family, community and culture to make available these resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways.

All the above-mentioned theorist's definitions emphasise the fact that an individual was exposed to or experienced significant trauma or hardships and has and exhibited positive adaptation to the adversity. Ungar's definition includes context and culture (Ungar, 2008). He emphasises that resilience is dependent on an adolescent's capacity to navigate towards protective resources that already exist and use these resources in a manner that is culturally significant to the adolescent, the family and his/her community. This definition considered the fact that some risks and protective factors are localised to particular social or cultural systems, including their risk modification trajectories.

2.6.2.2 *Academic resilience*

Academic resilience is a subset within the field of resilience research focused on schools and schooling. As is the case with the broad concept of resilience, researchers focusing on academic resilience have different definitions with related constructs and concepts that attempt to define a similar issue.

Morales and Trotman (2004) defines academic resilience as an individual's positive educational achievement despite their exposure to statistical risk factors.

Martin and Marsh (2003) define academic resilience as "the ability to effectively deal with setbacks, stress or pressure in the academic setting" (p.1).

Other researchers offer descriptions of learner's actions: Waxman, Gray and Padrón (2003) described resilient learners as those who succeed at school despite the presence of adversity. Although researchers gave several definitions of educational resilience, most researchers generally agree that academic resilience involves

learner's positive academic outcomes despite the risks/adversities to which they are exposed.

2.7 THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATIONAL RESILIENCE

The most prominent and systemic research on resilience has been conducted in the United States of America and Europe (Boyden & Cooper, 2007).

In a longitudinal study, Battle and Lewis (2002) followed a group of Grade 12 learners from the time they were in Grade 8. They found that during the middle school years, the differences between how students performed academically if they were from a one-parent household or a two-parent household was inconsequential. However, by Grade 12, learners who came from single-parent households lagged behind significantly, relative to their two-parent household counterparts (Battle & Lewis, 2002).

Martin and Marsh (2006) used a construct validity approach and examined educational and psychological correlates of educational resilience using a sample of 402 Australian high school learners. The 5-C model used by Martin and Marsh (2006) that focuses on the concepts of coordination, control, confidence, composure and commitment, is supported by empirical evidence. The invariance analysis across gender indicated that in terms of the measurement of educational resilience, boys and girls are not considerably different.

Wynn, Fite, and Pardini (2011) investigated the impact of academic resilience among various groups. The study examined which environmental factors influence transition into adulthood, using a sample of 397 black and white men aged between 19 and 20 years. Black participants were at greater risk for poor adjustment if they experienced academic failure, whereas white participants' poor adjustment was influenced by a lack of organisational involvement, such as belonging to religious or social groups. This implies that different protective factors promote resilience to different degrees among various racial and cultural groups. Furthermore, the experience of achievement is a protective factor that empowers some at-risk students to excel (Shepherd, Reynolds, & Moran, 2010).

Academic resilience occurs when students use internal and external strengths to overcome adverse experiences that impede educational attainment, in order to successfully adapt to social and academic demands (Howell, 2011; Morales, 2010). Other significant studies conducted on educational resilience include the work of McClendon, Nettles and Wingfield (2000); Nettles, Mucherach and Jones (2000); Padrón, Waxman and Huang (1999).

2.8 THE SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON ACADEMIC RESILIENCE

Compared to the United States of America and the United Kingdom, there are very few studies that explore educational resilience on the African continent. However, in South Africa a few studies have been conducted on educational resilience.

Theron and Theron (2010) identified a gap in South African resilience literature and analysed the research methods used in the South African youth resilience studies prior to 2009. Studies conducted after 2009 employed qualitative research methods and no studies employed mixed method designs or longitudinal studies. Between 1990 and 2008, a total of 23 articles of resilience studies were published. Nine of the 23 studies used a quantitative research design and only two studies had samples above 400 respondents. The quantitative studies did not make comparisons between different types of sites, but focused on schools, communities and residential settings. Most of the studies used questionnaires that were not resilience specific and used small samples. In the section below is some of the resilience studies conducted in South Africa.

Mampane (2004) conducted a mixed-method study to find a good way of identifying resilient and nonresilient learners in a township school environment and to understand the role that schools play in creating a positive educational environment. The study showed that the resilience scale was unreliable, but results of the qualitative interviews were more reliable in identifying resilient and nonresilient learners. The resilient learners utilised the available protective factors in their environment. Some nonresilient learners were unable to utilise the available protective factors in their environment, which led to continued struggles with peer pressure and rejection.

Dass-Brailsford (2005) studied academic achievement of black disadvantaged university students. The study revealed that the socio-economic status of the students did not affect their academic performance and goals. The protective factors that helped the students to realise academic achievement were individual characteristics like goal setting, motivation and self-efficacy. In addition, the participants believed in God as giving meaning to their lives and viewed school positively. The environmental protective factors were family support and institutional support, as they viewed their teachers as role models and sources of encouragement.

Mampane & Bouwer (2011) conducted a multiple case study in two secondary township schools with Grade 9 learners, using interactive qualitative analysis (IQA). Focus groups were conducted in each school, one group consisting of resilient learners and the other group consisted of less-resilient learners. Each group consisted of two girls and two boys. The findings from the resilient group revealed that township schools are able to create a constructive environment for learners by enforcing clear rules of conduct and accommodating adolescents' needs. The results of the less-resilient group indicated that not all township schools succeed in effectively supporting their learners and in promoting resilience.

Gasa and Plaatjies (2013) conducted a study of resilience and protective factors in learners who were raised in grandparent-headed families. The findings of the investigation revealed that most learners who grew up in grandparent-headed families showed resilience. The grandparents offered more stability and stable support to the learners and they provided a network of support that could be relied upon in various situations (Gasa & Plaatjies, 2013).

There are very few studies, internationally and locally, on the educational resilience of youths raised by grandparents. Most studies emphasise the impact that raising grandchildren has on grandparents and their wellbeing, and not on the wellbeing and school functioning of grandchildren. There is a need to understand the protective processes that lead to educational resilience in learners raised by grandparents. This study aims to identify protective factors that lead to the educational resilience of township youths raised by grandparents; also to address the gap in literature by investigating ways in which environmental factors in the family, school and community contribute hereto.

2.9 RISK FACTORS

Risk factors are “any influences that increase the chances for harm or more specifically, influences that increase the probability of onset, digression to a more serious state, or maintenance of a problem condition” (Fraser, Kirby & Smokowski, 2004, p.14). Risk factors may include biological, genetic, behavioural, demographic and sociocultural conditions.

Children exposed to one or more risks exhibit school-related difficulties in diverse ways, but not limited to low reading levels, low test scores, disruptive behaviour and low academic motivation (Richardson, 2009). Risk is applicable to children irrespective of ethnic background, religion, gender, or socio-economic status. When wealthy parents for example, do not provide a nurturing, affirming, loving and protective environment, the children will be at risk for poor developmental outcomes (Brendtro & Longhurst, 2005).

According to Reis, Colbert and Hébert (2005), intellectually gifted learners are at risk of academic failure when muffled by an uninteresting curriculum. However, when contemplating those at risk, one presupposes that children from a low socio-economic status are experiencing numerous risk factors that predict academic barriers with a higher prospect to not do well in their studies than their counterparts from upper economic status (Richardson, 2009).

2.10 PROTECTIVE FACTORS

According to Morales (2010) protective factors have the power to offset all or aspects of risk factors. He states that what is often lost when identifying protective factors is the recognition for the process and the specific relationship between the various protective and risk factors (Morales, 2010).

Protective factors are those individual characteristics or environmental conditions that help youths resist or counteract the risk to which they are exposed (Laser-Maira & Nicoreta, 2011; Ostaszewski & Zimmerman, 2006; Richman & Fraser, 2001). Protective factors may affect, alter or improve how an individual responds to the adversity that positions them at risk for maladaptive outcomes (Afifi & MacMillan, 2011). To set apart a protective factor, there must be a stressor that places an

individual at risk (Holmbeck, Jandasek, Sparks, Zukerman & Zurenda, 2008). Three factors closely linked to the development of resilience include the characteristics of individuals, the family environment and the wider social environment (Mihyeon, 2015).

According to Mandleco and Perry (2000) resilience-promoting factors in children develop internally in and/or externally from the individual. Internal factors include emotional, physiological and intellectual characteristics. External factors include families, schools and community services. As needs change, children develop, and challenges vary. Protective factors that may have insulated youth at one point, may be inept at other times. Protective factors can also be context bound, therefore, beneficial protective factors are a link between a need and an outcome (Brooks, 2006). The concept of protective factors working collaboratively to facilitate resilience has been emphasised by a number of researchers (Morales & Trotman, 2004; Ungar, 2004).

2.11 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

2.11.1 INTRODUCTION

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) formed the basis for this study. It was utilised to investigate the ecological factors that contribute to learners' educational resilience within the context of the system of relationships that form their environment. Researchers used an ecological framework to illuminate the relationship between risk and protective factors at different ecological levels (family, school and community) (Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willet & Stephens, 2001).

The ecological systems theory is a theoretical framework that describes the child's environment within the context of the system that forms the child's relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Furthermore it allows for an understanding of the multileveled interactions between youths and their environment. The environment adapts to accommodate the individual, and the individual adapts to accommodate their environment (Laser-Maira & Nicotera 2011). Owing to this interaction, neither the environment nor the individual will stay the same (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Bronfenbrenner posits that what happens between these systems can be as influential to development as what happens within them (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) highlight the continuous impact these systems have on an individual's development and suggest that individuals' upbringing, positive and negative experiences, and belief systems will influence how they interpret experiences and form a sense of self. Bronfenbrenner (1979) postulates that humans cannot be understood in isolation, but must be considered in their context of relationships with the environment. A child brings their own inherited biological set of variables to the environment. The child and the environment interact to constantly unfold developmental outcomes throughout the child's lifespan. The ecological systems theory specifies five systems discussed in the following section.

2.11.2 Microsystem

The microsystem is the child's immediate environment that includes family, school and community. These systems are direct influences on the child as they affect development and are the child's venue for primary learning about the world (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Daily patterns of relationships, activities and interactions occur in the microsystems. Caring relationships between the child and the parents, including other caregivers, can help to develop a healthy personality. If relationships in the family are weak, the child will not have the tools to explore other parts of their environment, because in the family system the child learns how to live (Swick, 2004).

The stability of the family as a microsystem is important for the developing child. When a child is placed with a grandparent or any caregiver, the stability of the microsystem might be affected, and adjustments may have to occur. In addition, the events that led to the child living away from the parents, may also affect the child negatively.

After the family, the school is an important environment for learners to develop social, psychological and physical wellbeing, and learn academic content (Govender et al. 2013). The attitudes and practices of teachers can provide support to learners that is necessary to minimise the effects of risk (Waxman et al., 2003). Peer relationships formed at school can have a positive or negative influence on academic resilience, depending on the quality of the relationship.

In relation to this study, it is essential to understand how the microsystems of learners interact with one another, and how the learners navigate to available resources. The contextual influence of the family, school and community was explored to understand how it contributes or does not contribute to the learner's academic resilience.

2.11.3 Mesosystem

In the mesosystem, various parts of the child's microsystems interact with one another. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the pivotal influence of mesosystems is that they assist in connecting two or more systems where the family, child or parent reside. This level involves the peer group, school, community and family (Maher, 2007). If there is an imbalance in the family, it could influence how the child responds to school. If a child is experiencing adversity at home and the school provides support and protection, then the child's sense of belonging and security increases, effectively modifying the child's behaviour and development (Donald et al, 2010). According to Coleman (2013), child development is likely to be optimised by strong links between microsystems (home, school and peer groups).

In this study, the collaboration between home and school will be explored. This also addresses parental/caregiver involvement in the learner's school work. The link between their home and school provides continuity for the youth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The collaboration between the schools and community agencies is also important in this study, as this reveals the ability or lack thereof of the school to provide in learners' social and emotional needs through available community agencies (e.g. social and psychological services). In addition, the available community resources will be explored to understand how they link with the school and family systems to contribute to the learner's academic resilience. Perceived social support from peers is also considered important, as peers form part of the youth's microsystem. The interaction and relationships between learners will help to explain how support from peers contributes to their educational resilience.

2.11.4 Exosystem

The exosystem include other systems in which a child is not directly involved. Events that take place in these systems affect what happens in the child's microsystem and have a direct effect on child's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Laser & Nicotera,

2011; Paquette & Ryan, 2009). Children's exosystem consists of their parent's work environment and community contexts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006).

To guarantee a functioning exosystem for the child, school administrators, teachers and parents should work together to plan and implement policies that ensure that children receive quality education (Coleman, 2013). Of considerable interest to this study is how the organisation of the community, the community's resources, community health organisations, welfare services, schooling, and extended family contribute to the learner's academic resilience and to further explore how the availability of services or lack thereof affect the learner's standard of living and how learners cope with their environmental constraints.

2.11.5 Macrosystem

The macrosystem consists of the dominant social structures, values, laws and customs that influence a society and is influenced by cultural values, beliefs and respect for adults that occur in the community (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2010). According to Coleman (2013), the macrosystem dictates how children should be treated, what they should be taught and the goals which they should strive for.

While the ecological system incorporates the sociological and psychological development of the child. The macrosystem level is an appropriate level to explore the multiple factors which interplay in the concept of educational resilience. Contextual elements (i.e. customs, laws, cultural context, socio-economic status and race), including attitudes towards rules are relevant to this study. It will help to understand the basis from which township learners' aspirations are formed and shaped.

2.11.6 Chronosystem

The chronosystem includes consistency or change over time in the characteristics of the individual or the environment the individual lives in (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). A child's developmental stages are influenced by the interactions between all ecological systems, which are all crossed by developmental time frames (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002).

Coleman (2013) documents that Bronfenbrenner emphasises that changes of the ecological context of development, or the child, can affect the direction that development is likely to take. Of considerable interest to this study is the grandparent-headed family structure. It will be explored to understand how it influences learners' academic resilience. It is necessary to understand the learners' chronosystem, because of the impact it may have on their aspirations and goals, since they are raised by their grandparents.

2.12 CONCLUSION

Evidence in the literature reviewed suggests that resilience is influenced by individual and environmental factors. This chapter also highlights that it is important for children to have protective resources to help them cope with adversity and that human experience does not take place in a vacuum, but in a specific context. To understand adolescents' perceived experiences, the context in which these experiences are generated has to be considered. Chapter 3 will discuss research design applicable to this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to investigate and understand how the microsystems (family, school, and community) impact the academic resilience of township youth raised by their grandparents. Therefore, the study focused strongly on resilience factors that are essential to their academic success.

In this chapter, I present the layout of the study, methodology, and procedures I used. To answer the primary research question: **“Which resilience contributory factors are essential for the academic success of township learners raised in grandparent families?”** I used a qualitative approach, which takes the experiences and views of the youth into consideration. I justify my choice of qualitative approach as a methodological paradigm and constructivism as metatheory. I further explain the phases of the study, documentation and data collection techniques used. I also include the method I employed to analyse data and conclude the chapter with a discussion on ethical considerations. Table 3.1 gives an overview of the research methodology.

Table 3.1: An Overview of the Research Methodology and Process

Research approach	
Methodological paradigm	Qualitative
Meta-theoretical paradigm	Constructivism
Research design	
Interpretive case study	
Research context	
Research site	
Participants	
Procedures for gaining access to the participants	
Establishing a researcher-participant rapport	
Sampling	

Selection of case	Snowball sampling
Selection of participants	Criterion sampling
Motivation for inclusionary and exclusionary criteria Academic success for the study	
Research method	
Data collection instruments	Data documentation techniques
Demographic information	Questionnaire
Semi-structured interviews	Recorded interviews and verbatim transcripts
Observations	Field notes
Document review and artefacts	Academic reports, certificates, and medals won
Data analysis	
Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)	
Rigour of the study	
Trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability	
Ethical considerations	
Informed consent and voluntary participation, privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, and protection from harm	
Limitation of the study	
Role of the researcher	
Conclusion	

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

3.2.1 Methodological paradigm

The development of paradigms has been influenced by the way people view reality objectively or subjectively (Collis & Hussey, 2009). Objective reality is when the researcher sees reality as independent and not influenced by the actions of individuals, while the subjective view of reality sees it as dependent on the individuals' actions. People's perception of reality changes over time, therefore, many paradigms have been formulated (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) point out that the ontological assumptions about the nature of knowledge underlying a paradigm, constrain the role of the researcher in obtaining that knowledge (epistemology) and ultimately influence the methods available to the researcher to obtain the knowledge (methodology). Creswell (2014) states that a research paradigm is the basis of an inquiry that explains how a researcher sees the social world. He further explains that a paradigm helps the reader to understand why a certain research design is chosen (Creswell, 2014). Different paradigms hold opposing ontological and epistemological outlooks, which means they have different assumptions of reality (ontology) and knowledge (epistemology) that underpin their particular research method (Babbie & Mouton, 2011).

To understand why a qualitative research method was most suitable for this study, I explored the paradigms related to quantitative and mixed-methods research in the following sections. In addition, I considered reasons why a researcher would choose each type of paradigm to conduct a research. Finally, I discussed the ontological and epistemological stance of both quantitative and mixed-methods research by demonstrating why a constructivist paradigm was regarded appropriate in this study.

3.2.2 The positivist paradigm

As a researcher, I considered the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the positivist paradigm to determine the most appropriate research methodology to adopt for this study. According to Reeves and Hedberg (2003), the ontological beliefs underlying the positivist paradigm are based on beliefs of a single, external reality that can only be measured quantitatively, often by using controlled experimental designs and statistical analysis of the data obtained. The epistemology associated with positivism is that of a separate, objective reality, independent of the researcher, the subjects and the measuring instruments used (Mertens, 2005; Wellington, 2000).

Creswell (2007) mentioned that quantitative research uses experimental and survey strategies for a mode of inquiry, and data is collected by predetermined instruments that yield statistical data. Results from quantitative research can be explanatory, predictive, and confirming. Maree (2010) explained that quantitative research is a

method for using numerical data obtained from a sample of a population in order to generalise the results to the field that is being explored. One reason why the use of the positivist approach for studies of social phenomena was criticised, is that the mechanistic view of human beings required by this approach was considered unrepresentative and unrealistic, because the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of humans cannot be controlled and manipulated in ways required by the experimental designs associated with the positivist paradigm (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The aim of this study is to look for patterns, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours, rather than testing or confirming a hypothesis. Based on the epistemological stance and views of positivism, this paradigm is not suitable for my subjective and in-depth understanding of participants in my study. Therefore, the qualitative methodology chosen is most suitable for the aim and purpose of this study.

3.2.3 Pragmatic paradigm

To determine the most appropriate research methodology to adopt for this study, I also explored the pragmatic paradigm, which disagrees with the positivist belief of epistemological purity and embraces many values of the constructivists. Researchers in this paradigm believe that the best approach to educational research is a pragmatic one, in which the value of research is judged by its effectiveness in finding solutions to research problems, rather than searching for truth (Mertens, 2005). This paradigm does not indicate which kind of research methodology a researcher should apply. Researchers in the pragmatic paradigm argue pragmatically that paradigm characteristics are self-sufficient and therefore, can be selected and combined to achieve the most suitable combination for a given problem (Green & Caracelli, 2003).

This research approach and methods are selected when they are the best way to answer the research questions for a particular study. This paradigm allows for some generalisation, usually associated with the positivist paradigm, and context consideration typically related to the interpretivist paradigm (Bloch et al. 2014). Although I could give reasons for adopting the pragmatic paradigm, it was not the most relevant paradigm because of the small number of participants I had.

3.2.4 Constructivist paradigm

The ontological beliefs underlying the constructivist paradigm are based on beliefs of multiple, individual realities which people construct, both individually and collectively, by ascribing meanings to various aspects of their social environments (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In most qualitative research literature, constructivism and interpretivism are interlinked and concepts interchange (Blaikie, 2007; Crotty, 1989; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 2000; Willis, 2007).

According to Repko (2012), the epistemological position of interpretivism is one of subjectivism, which is grounded in actual world phenomena. Although the world does not exist free of our knowledge of it, it can be interpreted by anyone, but can never really be known (Repko, 2012).

The epistemology associated with a constructivist paradigm is that of intimate involvement in choosing which data to collect, interpreting the data according to its own construction and interpretation of the social reality revealed by the subjects, and choosing which data to report (Creswell, 2012). Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) describe qualitative research as research that allows the researcher to capture participants' real-life experiences, while taking their context into consideration (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The main objective of qualitative research is to describe peoples' thoughts, actions, beliefs, and perceptions, in order to understand the phenomena from the participants' perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Constructivist research is generally not applicable to contexts other than the one being investigated. The onus for generalising from constructivist research may fall on the individual wanting to generalise a particular constructivist study (Mertens, 2005).

While accepting the merits and the diversity of each paradigm discussed above, namely positivism and pragmatism, neither of them reflects my belief system accurately. Instead, the constructivist paradigm describes my beliefs and offers me the freedom to focus on finding useful answers to the research questions. The constructivist paradigm corresponds with my aim to investigate and describe the resilience contributory factors that are essential for the academic success of township learners raised in grandparent-headed households. The case for the current study was four youths from a Mamelodi high school who regularly visit the Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room to study, use the internet, and the library.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN: CASE STUDY

3.3.1 Interpretive case study

A case study provides the researcher with an opportunity to collect detailed information in a real-world setting through interviews, using open-ended questions and probes to gain as much knowledge as possible from participants about a phenomenon (Yin, 2013). I collected data through demographic questionnaires and in-depth interviews; additionally, I reviewed the participants' academic reports. Interviews were audio-taped, tapes were transcribed, and data were coded for emergent themes, and analysed.

There were other qualitative approaches I could have chosen to investigate this phenomenon, but a case study was most appropriate. By using a case study, I was able to acquire a thorough understanding of the factors that the participants' perceived to be associated with their academic success. Creswell (2013) presented four other qualitative approaches along with case studies.

A phenomenological study was not the best fit because it requires the researcher to study the research participants for a lengthy period before patterns and relationships of meaning start to develop. Time was limited, and no patterns and relationships of meaning were necessary to investigate the research question. Grounded theory was not used because it involves the constant comparison of data to build a theory, which was not the intent of this study. Narrative research is similar to case study research. In narrative research, the stories must be told in chronological order, which is not necessary for case studies.

I decided that a single case study design was the best approach to use for this type of investigation, because the study involved a single unit, would be context-bound, and would require an in-depth study of the attitudes and values of the people involved, factors that comply with the description of case studies used by McMillan and Schumacher (2010). For this study, the phenomenon under investigation was resilience factors that are essential for the academic success of township learners raised in grandparent-headed families.

3.4 RESEARCH CONTEXT

3.4.1 Research site

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that the research site should be suitable for the study design and be practical for the researcher in terms of time, mobility and resources. I conducted the research at the University of Pretoria's (UP) Mamelodi campus. The Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room is a learning facility for learners in Mamelodi. The facility was established in 2009 as a partnership between the US Embassy in Pretoria and the University of Pretoria.

Since its establishment, regular science education programmes have been presented in the facility in addition to hosting English and Mathematics classes. It also serves learners with after-school programmes such as hands-on workshops in Science, Mathematics, and Technology, lectures on Environmental Studies, and talks on careers in science by local and international experts. The centre operates from 13:00–17:00, Monday to Friday and 8:00–13:00 on Saturdays. Pictures 1 to 4 give an overview of the Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room.



Picture 1: Exhibition Space Room



Picture 2: Audio-Visual Room



Picture 3: Library Area



Picture 4: Computer Room

Learners from Mamelodi attend the programmes and make use of the facility as a space to do their homework, use computers and the internet, and to borrow books from the library. The facility can accommodate 60 people and has four sections: a reading room, computer room with internet access, an exhibition room for science experiments and demonstrations, and an audio-visual auditorium for multimedia presentations. ([http://www.up.ac.za/article/reading room](http://www.up.ac.za/article/reading%20room)).

3.4.2 Participants

Participants in a qualitative study should be individuals who have experience and are able to relate to the phenomenon the researcher wishes to explore (Creswell, 2007). The participants in this study were purposefully selected and comprised of four girls of 13 and 14 years. They attended the same high school in Mamelodi and were in Grade 8 during this study. All participants were raised by their grandparents and visited the Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room after school to make use of the library for their schoolwork.

3.4.3 Procedures for gaining access to the participants

To gain access to participants, I used a gatekeeper. The administrator at the Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room acted as the gatekeeper for this research. Gatekeepers are individuals who can provide entry to a site and can assist the

researcher with locating potential participants who meet the criteria for the study (Brink & Benschop, 2014). The administrator provided a list with contact information of potential participants who met the research criteria.

I telephoned the learners to make initial contact to recruit them to join the study. After contacting eight potential participants, they all agreed to participate and a researcher-participant rapport was established. On the day of our first meeting, I explained the purpose of the study to potential participants. I handed out informed assent forms (see Appendix C), consent forms (Appendix D), and demographic questionnaires (Appendix A) to all potential participants to fill in at home, to sign and to bring back to our next scheduled meeting. Four participants submitted signed assent and consent forms, completed the demographic questionnaires, and provided academic report cards to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The other four potential participants who failed to assent and consent to the study had to be excluded. When the participants submitted the necessary documents, interviews were scheduled to be held in the Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room auditorium.

3.4.4 Establishing a researcher-participant rapport

It was necessary to build a rapport with participants to develop a personal relationship that allowed them to feel comfortable to share their personal stories (Qu & Dumay, 2011). I shared information with the participants about myself, the focus of the study, and my role as a student at UP, and through a few follow-up phone calls and text messages, the trust and rapport were established to conduct the study. This continued communication (a) confirmed they were still interested to participate in the research study; (b) checked if the participants were well; and (c) helped to schedule and reschedule interview times due to my working hours and to accommodate the participants' study schedules.

3.5 SAMPLING

3.5.1 Sampling of participants

Maree (2007) refers to sampling as the process used to select a portion of the population for study purposes. There are no formal guidelines for determining

appropriate sample size in qualitative research. However, Patton (2002) suggests that small samples in qualitative approaches can be very valuable, especially if the case is information rich. The sample size for qualitative research should be determined by the purpose of the inquiry, the goals of the research, and what is logistically possible in terms of a researcher's resources (Patton, 2002).

For this study, I sought township learners raised by grandparents who demonstrated academic success. The number of learners who met these criteria formed a limited size population, one that can be difficult to access due to the sensitive nature of family and financial background. My final sample size consisted of four participants. This study employed a combination of two purposive sampling strategies: snowball and criterion sampling. Purposive sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind. Participants are selected because they possess characteristics that could make them sources of rich information needed for the study (Maree, 2007).

3.5.2 Snowball sampling: Phase one

Maree (2010) states that the snowball sampling method is often used in cases where the population is difficult to find, or where the research interest is in an interconnected group of people. He further states that the starting point for this method is making contact with one or more people who belong to the population. They are interviewed or handed a questionnaire and then asked for information about others who have the same characteristics who can be contacted next (Maree, 2010).

In this study, I purposively selected participants using a snowball sampling and criterion strategy to locate individuals who knew people who fit the criteria of this study (Creswell, 2007). I initially contacted an organisation working with orphans and vulnerable children in Mamelodi schools. The organisation confirmed that they had about 60 learners raised by grandparents on their database. I was confronted with a barrier to meet with the potential participants because they were attending different schools. The organisation does not have a central place where they meet the children; case workers visit the learners at their homes. Considering this fact, it was going to be difficult for me to meet with the learners in one central location, or to visit them at home with different case workers. I then consulted the Itsoseng Clinic, situated on UP's Mamelodi campus, to see if they had suitable subjects for my study. I found out that learners who are referred to the clinic by schools, are learners who experience barriers

to learning. These learners were not suitable for the study, as my study is about educational resilience, therefore, the participants have to do well academically despite their hardships.

The clinic’s supervisor then referred me to the Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room where I eventually found potential participants. The participants of this study were readily available in one place and the administrator supported me throughout the identification process and provided me with contact information of eight possible learners.

3.5.3 Criterion sampling: Phase two

The aim of Phase two of the study was to select information-rich cases of learners who are raised in grandparent-headed households and who are resilient academically. Out of the initial eight identified learners, four participants were willing to participate in the study. The other potential participants were not included because they did not fill in the demographic questionnaire and the guardian consent forms.

The study criteria were based on a review of the learners’ demographic questionnaires and academic reports. The following inclusionary and exclusionary criteria in Table 3.2 were used to select and screen learners who participated in the study.

Table 3.2: Inclusionary and Exclusionary Criteria

Inclusionary criteria	Exclusionary criteria
Attending school in a township	Not attending school in a township
Raised by grandparents/a grandparent	Not raised by grandparents/a grandparent
Academically successful	Academically unsuccessful
Between 13 and 18 years	Under 13 or over 18 years old

3.5.4 Motivation for inclusionary and exclusionary criteria

The inclusionary criteria listed above are collectively and interactively regarded as having some risk factors that could impede the academic resilience of township learners raised by grandparents, for example:

- According to the Curriculum Review (1999), township schools are vulnerable to unsafe conditions and threats of violence, have limited resources, insufficient infrastructure, and not an ideal location, especially if it is situated in or near informal settlements.
- Grandparent-headed households are described by Toremann (2009) as fragile since most grandparents have financial constraints, struggle with their health, custodial matters, as well as psychological and behavioural challenges they face with their grandchildren. These factors can be stressful to the learners and may positively or negatively influence their behaviour and their relationships with their family, educators, and community.
- Adolescence as a developmental stage can pose challenges to some learners and, therefore, may negatively affect their selection of personal goals and values, which may in turn affect their academic success.

3.5.5 Academic success for the study

For learners to progress from grade to grade, they have to offer eight subjects with the promotion required of the nine subjects, see table 3.3 (National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grade R-12).

Table 3.3: Department of Basic Education Promotion Requirements (Senior Phase)

Subject	Percentage	Level
Home Language	50-59	Level 4

English First Additional Language (FAL)	40-49	Level 3
Mathematics	40-49	Level 3
Natural Sciences		Level 3 in any three of the other required subjects and Level 2 in any of the two of the other required subjects. A learner can get Level 1 (0–29%) in any of these subjects, but not in the first three.
Social Sciences		
Life Orientation		
Technology		
Arts and Culture		
Economic Management and Sciences		

Academic success was measured by comparing learners' marks to the pass requirements of the Senior Phase (Grade 7–9) in the following subjects: English FAL, Mathematics and Life Orientation. The subjects were chosen to represent both the learners' verbal and non-verbal abilities.

The demographic questionnaire had a section for marks to be filled in by me as the researcher. The participants had to submit their completed demographic questionnaires and academic reports to me, so that I could verify their academic success. The following marks (see Table 3.4) were captured as they appeared in the participants' term three academic report cards.

Table 3.4: Academic Marks of the Participants

Name	Age	Grade	Marks obtained		
			English FAL	Mathematics	Life Orientation
P1	13	8	80	56	96
P2	13	8	72	49	88
P3	13	8	88	40	90
P4	14	8	76	41	90

English FAL: It is the language of learning and teaching at school and essential for academic success. English FAL is important to develop thinking and reasoning, and cognitive academic skills needed for studying subjects offered in English. The First Additional Language curriculum focuses on the following skills: listening and speaking, reading and viewing, writing and presenting, comprehension and language structures and conventions (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements [CAPS], 2012).

Mathematics: According to the CAPS (2012), Mathematics increases logical and critical thinking, accuracy and problem-solving skills that enhance decision-making. Five main content areas offered in Senior Phase (Grade 7–9) Mathematics are: geometry; numbers, operations and relationships; patterns, functions and algebra; measurement; and data handling.

All participants in this study attend the Mae Jemison US Reading Room classes for assistance with Mathematics. They all mentioned that their Mathematics marks have improved compared to what they achieved in the first two school terms.

Life Orientation is the most essential subject for practical experience and teaching of life skills. It is designed to develop a learner’s ability to apply goal-setting, problem-solving and decision-making strategies, and to promote self-motivation (CAPS, 2012). These skills are essential to building resilience in learners.

The Department of Basic Education (2011) states that skills such as reading, writing, critical thinking, and numerical problem solving are required for further education, job

satisfaction, productivity and meaningful citizenship. Through the inclusionary and exclusionary criteria process, information-rich participants were identified.

3.6 RESEARCH METHOD

3.6.1 Data collection instruments

In this study, data were collected in the form of a demographic questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. To gather a wide range of data inputs from the participants, three techniques were used: academic records, interviews, and a review of literature.

3.6.1.1 Demographic questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to capture the participants' demographic, educational, and domestic information. Participants were selected to participate in the study based on the information they provided, and profiles were created for each of them. Only four participants submitted completed questionnaires.

3.6.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were the primary strategy that was selected for data collection. Esterberg (2002) viewed interviews as a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee in which the interviewer asks questions and the interviewee answers accordingly. I made the interviews conversational, which helped to put the participants at ease and create an optimal interviewing environment. I used one-on-one interviews to collect data from the participants. One advantage of a one-on-one interview is that it affords the participants an opportunity to give in-depth information about their lived experiences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). Interviews were conducted privately with only one participant and myself in the room during each interview.

An interview guide was used (see Appendix B) to engage each participant in an interview that lasted approximately 25 to 30 minutes. The interview guide's questions were created from information found in sources during the literature review.

Interview guides are created to assist the researcher with staying focused on the research topic to solicit quality information from the research participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). An interview guide safeguards against deviation from the core interview questions and ensure consistency from one interview to another (Patton, 2002). To reduce the task of organising and analysing data during the data analysis process, questions in the interview guide were prepared in a way that provided a thematic focus. When necessary, probing questions were used to encourage participants to elaborate or clarify a response (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I audio-taped the interviews with the participants' approval (Merriam, 2009).

3.6.1.3 Observations and field notes

Field notes were taken during each interview. I was able to gain access to comprehensive information during interviews and observed the participants' natural behaviour, non-verbal cues and reactions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). According to Mack, et al. (2005) a researcher may document observations about the interview content, the participant, and the context.

As part of my field notes, I took photographs to capture aspects of the clean, orderly and quiet environment of the UP's Mamelodi campus in contrast to the surrounding area which was busy and somewhat chaotic (see Appendix C). The surrounding area was also photographed to highlight the environment in which the participants live. I did not take many notes during individual interviews because I gave the participants my undivided attention. My main focus was on the participants' body language, gestures, facial expressions and attitude as they spoke about their experiences.

3.6.1.4 Document review

I used school reports and awards in this study to verify the participants' educational achievements and to corroborate information gathered from them. One participant brought sports and academic medals she has won (see Appendix D). The document review provided a comprehensive picture about the participants' academic and sports achievements (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2009).

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS: Thematic analysis

Babbie and Mouton (2010) describe data analysis as a process of breaking data into manageable themes, trends, patterns and relationships. Braun and Clarke (2006) cite Boyatzis (1998), who described a thematic analysis as a method employed to identify, analyse and report patterns within data and described data sets in minimal detail. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that this method is flexible, and it is not theoretically bounded to any pre-existing theoretical framework, thereby allowing the researcher to determine themes in different ways. Holloway and Todres (2003) state that it is important for researchers to make their theoretical assumptions clear when applying a method to data. In addition, Attride-Stirling (2001) advises qualitative researchers to be explicit about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and state how they did their analysis. I employed Braun & Clarke's (2006) process of thematic analysis (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Steps in Thematic Analysis

	Phase	Description of phase
1	Familiarising yourself with the data	Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that familiarisation is about starting to read data as data. Rossman and Rallis (2003) emphasise the importance of reviewing data thoroughly to understand and know the data. I engaged with the data in an active way by transcribing all the verbal data verbatim and checked the transcripts against the audio recordings for accuracy. I re-read the transcripts, made notes of aspects that seemed significant, and searched for meaning and patterns. As patterns began to emerge, I was cautious not to read too much into it, seeing that these assumptions could be influenced by my own perceptions and ideas (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

2	Creating initial codes	<p>Coding was done using Microsoft Word. I coded data for potential themes. When I identified a relevant segment of text, I assigned a code to it.</p> <p>An extensive list of independent data codes was established across the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).</p>
3	Generating themes	<p>I used a mind map to sort the initially coded and collated data into possible themes, then the closely connected coded data excerpts were put together with the identified themes. I focused on semantic meaning and started to look for a connection between codes, themes and different levels of themes. At this stage, some initial codes formed main themes and others formed subthemes. Data that seemed not to belong anywhere was not discarded at this stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Theme identification is a diligent process which requires openness to change, as themes need to be revisited to accommodate new codes (Attride-Stirling, 2001).</p>
4	Reviewing themes	<p>This stage involved checking whether the extracted codes of each theme formed a consistent pattern. For patterns that formed a constant pattern, I considered the validity of the themes regarding the whole data set. After the review and refinement process, the difference and similarity between the themes told a convincing story and answered the research questions. At the</p>

		end of this stage the thematic map was accurate and irrelevant codes were discarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
5	Defining and naming themes	I identified the essence of each theme and how it applies to the research questions. I wrote a detailed analysis of each theme and checked whether themes contained subthemes. At this stage, I could without doubt define what the themes represented and what they were not. I finally named the themes in such a manner that a reader could get an idea of what the theme is about (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Attride-Stirling, 2001).
6	Producing the report	In this last stage, I chose extracts which captured the point I intended to demonstrate and provided adequate proof of themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8 RIGOUR OF THE STUDY

3.8.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness has been addressed by several researchers (Kumar, 2011; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow, 2005; Winter, 2000). The following section discusses the measures of trustworthiness applied in this study.

3.8.2 Credibility

Shenton (2004) defined credibility as the ability of the researcher to convince the reader about the trustworthiness of the research findings. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2004) stated that triangulation is important in establishing data trustworthiness. To establish trustworthiness in this study, I compared observation notes with interview

transcripts and checked interview transcripts against documents (demographic questionnaires and school reports) to corroborate what participants reported (Patton, 2002). To review findings, I employed member-checking and peer-debriefing. In the peer-debriefing process, I enlisted the support of my study supervisor who helped to confirm the findings and suggested additional findings. This process helped me to probe any biases I had, challenged presumptions or interpretations, and clarified my thoughts (Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2001). To facilitate member-checking I got participants to check transcripts for accuracy (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

3.8.3 Transferability

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of a study can be generalised to a similar context (Tobin & Begley, 2004; Shenton, 2004). This study does not claim statistical generalisability because it consists of a small sample within a specific context and qualitative methods, which focus on in-depth understanding and illumination of an identified problem. I provided a detailed description of the inquiry and the case under study to establish transferability of this study. I further provided information about the setting and context of the participants, for the reader to get an idea of the circumstances in which these participants live.

3.8.4 Conformability

Conformability can be seen as the objectivity of the research. The research findings should not reflect the researcher's bias or motivation, but should reflect the views of participants (Shenton, 2004). To accomplish conformability, I used the participant's verbatim responses to report findings without adding or omitting anything. This prevented me from being biased. I also consulted the participants regarding information they provided and made certain that the data analysis and coding of the data reflect what they intended to say and confirm their experiences rather than my biased interpretations.

3.8.5 Dependability

Creswell (2012) explained that dependability in qualitative research means that the researcher has provided an in-depth coverage, allowing the reader to follow the extent to which proper research practices have been followed. Additionally, dependability of qualitative research is measured by the operational detail of data gathering and a reflective appraisal of the project. I have provided details of the data collection method and data analysis process carried out in this study. He further suggested that the researcher describes the planning and execution of the research design and its implementation (Creswell, 2012).

In this study, I explained the use of case study research, justified my reasoning for choosing such an approach, provided documentation of the data collection process and analysis, and described in detail how the findings emerged from the data.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Axiology deals with issues of value and is closely linked to ethics and aesthetics (Arora, 2010). According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006), the researcher should engage in ethical practices throughout the research process. Ethics should be the researcher's primary consideration and not an afterthought. The following safeguards were used to protect the participants in this study:

3.9.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

According to Creswell (2012), informing potential participants about the study could potentially display sensitivity on the researcher's part to the time and effort respondents will expend by participating in the research. All potential Participants were given adequate information pertaining to the study such as the nature and benefits of the study before its commencement. They were advised in writing of the voluntary nature of their participation and that they could stop participating in the study at stage if they wanted to. They were also made aware that they could decline to answer questions anytime during the process. A letter of assent was given to all participants to read, ask questions to gain clarity, and sign the form if they were willing to participate

(see Appendix E). They were also given consent letters to ask their guardians for permission to participate in the study (Appendix F).

3.9.2 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

Babbie and Mouton (2004) explain that confidentiality is promising to keep participants' responses from being utilised in any other way than what was stated to them. Additionally, McMillan and Schumacher (2010) point out that confidentiality involves protecting participants' privacy from other persons in the same setting. Participants were assured that all information that they shared during the research will be kept private and will be treated with integrity and confidentiality. To ensure confidentiality, my computer is password protected and only I have access to the data. All paper documents and the transcribed data were securely stored and locked in a cupboard at my home. When the study is concluded, all raw data, including interview recordings, will be handed over to my supervisor to store according to the university's regulations. The anonymity of participants was protected by numerically coding each returned demographic questionnaire and the responses were kept confidential. All identifying information was removed from participants' responses and was replaced with pseudonyms.

3.9.3 Protection from harm

According to Patton (2002) researchers must regard the probability of the disclosure of harmful, intimate information during the data collection process. Researchers must protect the privacy of participants and protect them from harm, whether it is physically, emotionally or psychologically (Babbie, 2007; Brenner, 2006; Salkind, 2012; Shank & Brown, 2007; Walliman, 2011). The participants in this study were given contact details of three available counselling services on the UP's Mamelodi campus, in case they needed counselling. I also offered to make an appointment on their behalf if they so wished. If there had been any adverse events involving research participants who might require an immediate referral, I would have stopped the interview, turned off the audio recorder, and engaged in conversation with the research participant to address concerns. I would have ensured that the participant was comfortable with continuing the interview by rebuilding trust and reiterating the benefits and purpose of the

research study. If they would have continued to feel uncomfortable, I would have reminded them of their right to terminate their participation in the study at any time without being penalised and the participant would have been offered a resource sheet for counselling services and support.

3.10 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The application of qualitative inquiry demands that the inquirer serves as an instrument of data collection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). My primary role as a researcher was to collect data using data collection strategies, analyse and interpret the data and come to a conclusion (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007). In order to collect data effectively, I established a rapport with the participants before data collection and the intentions of the study were explained to them truthfully.

Since I am a teacher at a local primary school, some of the participants may know me as a teacher, so I explained to them that my role as the researcher was not connected to my role as a teacher. This was done to minimise perceived coercion to participate in the study. It turned out that one participant knew who I was because her brother attends school at the school where I work. I immediately asked her if she was comfortable participating in the study and she agreed to participate.

Patton (2015) states that qualitative inquiry documents the things that happen to real people in their own words, from their own perspective, and within their own context. In this study, I applied member checks and peer reviews through my supervisor to help me maintain reflexivity. The implementation of such safeguards helped to reduce my bias by ensuring that my personal perspectives and values did not bring the trustworthiness of the data into question. It further ensured that the study findings explained the meaning of the phenomenon according to the participants' view and not my perception (Creswell, 2014).

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the process undertaken during the research, as well as what I aimed to focus on during the process. I discussed the paradigmatic perspective I chose for the study that influenced the decisions I made to conduct the study. I

described the research process and my methodological choice in detail, which included the selection of the participants, the case, research context, data collection instruments, sampling, data analysis, and rigour of the study. Ethical guidelines that were followed during the study were discussed in detail and I concluded with an explanation of my role as researcher. The next chapter describes the results of the study, including the themes and subthemes.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The demographic profiles of the participants are described in this chapter. My research findings are reported in themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from utilising thematic data analysis. The findings are supported by statements made by participants during their interviews and linked to literature. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant, teachers, and friends mentioned in the study.

4.2 THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 4.1 provides the demographic information of participants. The purpose of the demographic questionnaire was to understand where, with whom, and under which circumstances these participants live, and it enabled me to create their profiles. The sample of this study is $n = 4$.

Table 4.1: Demographic Information of Participants

Name	P1	P2	P3	P4
Age	13	13	13	14
Sex	Female	Female	Female	Female
Ethnicity	Black	Black	Black	Black
Grade	8	8	8	8
Grades repeated	None	None	None	None

Participate in free school lunch	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School location	Formal section of Mamelodi Township	Formal section of Mamelodi Township	Formal section of Mamelodi Township	Formal section of Mamelodi Township
Head of the home	Grandmother	Grandfather	Grandmother	Grandmother
Number living in the home	6	6	5	7
Receiving social grant	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number receiving social grants	3 (grandmother, participant, and her brother)	4 (grandmother, participant, her brother and 1 cousin)	2 (grandmother and participant)	3 (grandmother, younger brother and participant)
Family relying on social grants	No (parent sends money)	No (parent sends money and grandfather is working)	No (parents send money)	No (parent sends money)
Type of dwelling	RDP house	RDP house	RDP house	RDP house
Monthly household income	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure	Unsure

Note. RDP = Reconstruction and Development Programme

4.2.1 Summary of demographic information

Based on demographic information, all participants came from a low socio-economic background. All lived in overcrowded, low-cost homes, relied on social grants to supplement family income and received nutritional support from the school. All participants attended a quintile 4 school with nutritional feeding scheme support to all

learners. None of the participants were living with their parents for various reasons (migrant workers, or married to a person who is not a biological parent of the participant). All lived with a grandparent/s and extended families.

P1 lived in a household with five persons, including her grandmother, aunt, two cousins and her younger brother. Three people in the household received social grants. Another source of income for the family came from P1's mother, who lived with her employers and supported the family with her income. She came home at the end of every month. The family lived in a low-cost house, owned by her grandmother.

P2 lived in a household with five persons, including her grandmother, grandfather, uncle, younger brother and one cousin. Four people in the household received social grants. P2's grandfather was working as a gardener, her uncle was also working, although she was unsure where. Her mother was also employed, but did not live with them. She contributed money for food and other expenses to the household. The family lived in a low-cost house owned by her grandmother and grandfather.

P3 lived in a household with four persons, including her grandmother, grandmother's sister and two aunts. P3 and her grandmother were the only people receiving social grants. Her grandmother's sister was working and both her aunts were still studying and had reached tertiary level. Both P3's parents were working and have their own low-cost house. Her parents contributed money for food and other expenses to the household. The family lived in a low-cost house owned by her grandmother.

P4 lived in a household with six persons, including her grandmother, older sister, younger sister and three uncles. Her older sister and uncles had outside rooms to sleep in. P4 shared a bedroom with her younger brother. P3, her grandmother and her younger brother received social grants. Her mother sent money at the end of the month and her grandmother had a tailoring business, thus the family did not rely on social grants only for income. The family lived in a low-cost house owned by her grandmother.

The following picture is an example of the type of house the participants lived in (RDP house).



Picture 5: RDP House

4.3 RESULTS OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The frequency of statements from participants' interviews helped me to determine the importance of each aspect as an encouraging characteristic or as a deterrent to the academic success of the participants. I identified three overarching themes, namely:

- Supportive relationships promote educational resilience across contexts
- Environmental risks impact negatively on educational resilience across contexts
- Individual strengths contribute to educational resilience.

Table 4.2 provides an overview of the themes and subthemes obtained from collected data.

Table 4.2: Themes and subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
Supportive relationships promote educational resilience across	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of support from family members • Experiences of support from school

contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences of support from the community • Experiences of support from peers
Environmental risks impact negatively on educational resilience across contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to risk in the family • Experiences of risk within the school environment • Experiences of risk in the community
Individual strengths contribute to educational resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-drive and internal locus of control • Sense of self-efficacy • Goal-setting • Positive use of time

4.3.1 Theme 1: Supportive relationships promote educational resilience across contexts

Table 4.3: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Theme 1

Subtheme	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Family support	Any reference to support structures within the family	Any reference to support structures outside the family
School support	Any comments on support structures within the school environment	Any comments on support structures outside the school environment
Community support	Any reference to the utilisation of resources in the community	References to the utilisation of resources outside the community
Peer support	Any remark about support from peers	Remarks about support from people other than peers

4.3.1.1 Experiences of support from the family

- **Emotional support**

Based on the data obtained during individual interviews, it appears that support from family members (e.g. grandparents, mothers, fathers, uncles etc.) contributes to positive academic outcomes. Words of encouragement from grandparents were important sources of support that helped the participants to cope with their studies. The following responses from the participants regarding their family members' support, captured the essence of and sentiments on which they attributed their academic success.

P1, Line 46: *I can say my grandmother.* Lines 48–50: *She is always telling me when I fail not to give up, one day I will be successful, one day I'll do it better, I will do better next time.*

P1, Lines 163–164: *Uhm, my family and my grandmother. They always tell me to do the best, that I should not doubt myself, I'm the best.* Lines 250–251: *In my family schoolwork comes first, my granny always ask me about schoolwork.*

P2, Line 44: *What makes me successful is that I always listen to my grandmother.* Lines 138–140: *I always get good advice from my granny 'cause she always encourage me to do the right things, the right way.*

Grandparents were the most frequently referred to as sources of support and played a significant role in motivating participants in their education. This is likely a result of the fact that the participants were raised by and lived with their grandparents. Participants were able to achieve academically with the assistance, support, and guidance of their families.

In the South African context, close family support depends a lot on the support from extended family, which leads to a wider informal network of supportive relationships (Cook & Du Toit, 2005; Dass-Brailsford, 2005; Theron, 2007). Other family members were also mentioned as sources of academic support. Participants also received support from their parents.

P1, Line 217: *With schoolwork, it's my mother and uncle.* Lines 219–220: *My uncle helps me with Mathematics sometimes, but he doesn't stay at the house.* Line 222: *And my mother is English.*

P2, Lines 163–164: *My mother. Sometimes when I visit her, she always talks to me about growing up, things like that.*

P3, Lines 139–140: *Even though I don't live with my mother, but my mother sometimes contributes to my schoolwork.*

P4, Lines 173–175: *My daddy, he's always supportive with my studies. Whenever I maybe pass a test or a grade he rewards me.*

Parental and family involvement and their interest in the participants' school-related activities, show participants the high value their families place on education. Holborn and Eddy (2011) state that children with parents who provide emotional and practical support, such as assistance with homework, subject choices and later career guidance, do better at school and when entering the job market. Gonzalez-DeHass, Willems and Holbein (2005) believe that learners become motivated when they experience their parents taking an active interest in their schoolwork and activities. In this study, the parents provided academic support, which is critically important to learners' school achievement, and the grandparents provided emotional support that enabled learners to function well at school.

- **Clear open communication as a form of support**

When participants were asked who has always been there for them, they all mentioned their grandmothers:

P1, Line 182: *My grandmother.* Line 187: *Because she is always there for me.*
Lines 189–191: *Like she sits down with me and tells me don't feel bad about yourself, you know like, but you are a good person.*

P2, Line 169–171: *We are always communicating. She is always friendly, open. She always tells me if I have a problem I must tell her.*

P3, Line 146–147: *I go to my grandmother, 'cause she listens to me carefully and helps me to solve my problems.*

P4, Line 167: *My grandmother 'cause I live with her.*

The participants' responses indicated that the accessibility of family support and encouragement helps them to cope emotionally and that this helps them to have more self-confidence, which in turn makes them more prone to succeed academically. Grandparents were perceived as being more affectionate and communicative than critical and rejecting. Without communication, it would be difficult to build and maintain relationships.

All participants viewed their relationships with their grandparents as positive. This was captured in their responses when they were asked about the nature of their relationships with their grandparents:

P1, Line 226: *It's strong.*

P2, Line 167: *It's good.*

P3, Line 160: *It's perfect.*

P4, Line 180: *Ja, it's a very strong relationship.*

Warm, caring, supportive relationships and family members' positive attitudes about education promote academic achievement, reduce stress in children, and protect them from adversities. On the contrary, apathetic relationships, or relationships characterised by conflict can cause distress in children that may interfere with their proper functioning at school (Crosnoe, Mistry & Elder 2002; Davies, 2004; Fraser, Kirby & Smokowski, 2004). All participants were able to form secure attachments with their grandparents, which could be a key protective factor to their academic resilience and enable resilient functioning.

4.3.1.2 Experiences of support from school

- **Caring and emotional support from teachers**

According to Marzano and Marzano (2003), showing interest in learners as individuals has a positive impact on their learning. Positive relationships with teachers at school was a salient form of support for all participants. Asked about school staff members who contribute or have contributed to their academic success, participants mentioned mostly teachers.

P1, Lines 338–314: *You know, I can say my teachers always motivate us to do better, like we should listen to them and other teachers.*

Interestingly, when I further asked P1 if she had a specific teacher who motivated her, she mentioned her primary school teacher.

P1, Line 321–339: *I'm not sure, but I think it's Mam Mazibuko (pseudo name). She's my grade one, two and three teacher. We always go to her when we have problems, she helps us when we need something.*

It seems P1 and her primary school teacher formed a long-term relationship that was still continuing post primary school. The teacher supported her with personal needs.

She further described her teacher:

Line 357: *She is always open to us and she's welcoming.*

P2 mentioned her current teacher:

Lines 246-248: *This year it's my class teacher, Mr Matlala (pseudo name). He's always helping us with our work. He said if you want help, you can come to him.*

She also mentioned a particular primary school teacher and described how she helped her.

Lines 250–251: *In the past it's been many teachers. Ma'am Sithole (pseudo name).*

Lines 253–254: *After school, actually in the morning, we come at school at seven o'clock.*

Lines 256–257: *They make sure we do something with only 30 minutes or one hour.*

P2 acknowledged that the extra effort the teacher made, contributed towards her academic achievement.

P3 identified her teacher's interest in her schoolwork as contributing positively to her school success.

Line 291: *My class teacher.* Lines 296-300: *Like when my marks are getting lower, he sometimes gets concerned and asks me my problems about what's*

happening at home and sometimes calls my mother to come, and he tells her to help me on certain subjects.

In this instance, the teacher shows interest in the learner's academic progress and got the parents to be involved in her studies.

P4, Lines 280–281: *A teacher called Sir Tibane (pseudo name), he contributes a lot to our schoolwork. He helps us with some Mathematics difficulties.* Lines 287–288: *Whenever we have any problem in any subject we can go to him.* Lines 294–295: *He uses our free periods and when he is free he tries to help.*

According to the participants, they all had at least one teacher whom they could go to when they needed help with schoolwork. It appeared that their teachers were approachable, showed personal interest in the learners' schoolwork and progress, and were willing to put in extra time towards the academic achievement of the learners. The analysis of the interview transcriptions indicates the importance of teachers building solid relationships with learners, as they have an immediate and direct impact on the academic achievement of learners, some still even after many years.

Supportive teacher-learner relationships promote learner engagement in learning activities and academic achievement (Split, Hughes, Wu, & Kwok, 2012). In addition, positive teacher-learner relationships promote feelings of security that allows children to interact with their environment confidently (Bergin & Bergin, 2009) and may decrease negative behavioural outcomes in children (Griggs, Gagnon, Huelsman, Kidder-Ashley & Ballard, 2009).

4.3.1.3 Experiences of support from the community

- **Access to information and academic support**

Analysis of the interview transcriptions uncovered several protective factors that were connected to community factors, which promote academic resilience in township learners raised by grandparents. These included relationships with community members and engagement in community activities. All participants indicated the presence of a community member who is supporting them.

P1, Line 369: *Ja, it's Kamogelo (pseudo name). Lines 371–372: She always helps me with Mathematics. When I need help, I go to her, she explains to me, and she is like a teacher to me sometimes.*

P2, Lines 270–272: *It's my coach (football coach). When I need, maybe I want to research, he does it at where he works. At his workplace he will search for me and make photocopies for me.*

P3, Line 337: *My mother's friend. Lines 341–343: ... if I don't understand something from school then I just go to her and I understand her better 'cause she's patient.*

P4, Lines 327–328: *Thabo (pseudo name). He's a neighbour. He helps me with schoolwork and projects.*

Relationships with at least one supportive adult member of the community provided an indirect and immediate source of support to all participants. Community members were readily available to assist participants with schoolwork.

Regarding community or organisational institutions, services, religious institutions, or child care services that have influenced their academic success, the participants responded affirmatively about the community resources they were able to access and utilise.

P1, Lines 380–382: *Here at Mae Jemison centre there is a summer and winter programme. Lines 393–394: Like uhm, they teach us subjects like Mathematics, English, things like that, and ballet, ja.*

Through her church involvement, P1 was engaged in activities like Bible study and music that she enjoyed.

P1, Lines 381–382: *... and at our church there is a choir practise you know, we learn more about music like choir. Lines 385: Sometimes, there are bursaries and we also do Bible study.*

P2, Line 279: *Here at the University of Pretoria [Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room (MJRR)]. Lines 276–277: Computer class, we do it every Friday and they teach about computers. Lines 282–285: and winter jam to help us with*

Mathematics, all those things during winter. When schools are closed in June they provide us with free internet and sometimes we come here for researching, photocopying and reading.

P2 also reported that she was involved in extracurricular activities in her community.

Lines 32–33: *In soccer I have gotten player of the tournament twice.*

Through her participation in soccer, the participant may have learned to be a team player, it may have built her character, developed a sense of responsibility and commitment, which in turn may have helped to develop resilient behaviour.

P3, Lines 351–354: *Yes, its Mae Jameson centre because sometimes we need to get onto the internet and we don't have internet at home. We come and just research our school assignments here and get our work done.* Lines 356–358: *In winter they offer us winter programmes, even in summer. We have summer programmes during January until we reopen for school.* Lines 337–338: *Yes, they help us, like give us exercises, mark our books, things like that.*

P4 Lines 284–286: *There are community members and Mamelodi initiative here in Vista Pretoria [MJRR]. It's a winter jam [special programmes offered during winter school holidays], so we come here and attend. They teach us English and Mathematics.* Lines 360–361: *They do some programmes on Wednesdays and on Thursdays, there's girls club and Mondays. Ja, they do help.* Line 323: *Ja, we study, and they advise us in careers and stuff.*

Community resources provide an opportunity for learners' involvement in meaningful activities. All participants identified the MJRR as a community resource that contributes to their academic success. The programmes and resources offered by the centre, such as library resources, internet services, computer literacy, career guidance, academic support, and ballet lessons, serve the vital role of filling in the gaps left by schools or the limited resources of their families.

- **Caring and emotional support from peers**

All participants perceived time spent with peers as positive because of opportunities for collaboration and networking that supported and motivated them. The motivational

actions of friends vary from helping each other with schoolwork to just talking about life issues. When participants were asked what they do with their friends during school, after school and during weekends? They responded as follows:

P1, Lines 317–318: *During weekends sometimes, we gather and play like, ja, we just play and sit together.* Lines 320–321: *At school we practise Mathematics most of the time because we are trying to improve our marks.* Lines 322–326: *After school we come to Mae Jemison centre to get ... we borrow books so that we can improve our English and our reading.*

P2, Lines 223–225: *What I do with my friends? We always play. We always read or ask teachers. Other learners say that we just like attention.* Lines 231–232: *We have a study group. When we are six, we are all together and help each other.* Lines 234–235: *On Saturdays we go out, maybe sometimes we come here.* [MJRR].

P3, Line 276: *We just like to sit, chat and make jokes.* Line 278: *After school we practise aerobics.* Lines 280–281: *During weekends we come here at Mae Jemison centre for Mathematics classes.*

P3 seemed to be able to rely on her friends for emotional support when she needed it:

P3, Line 260: *Mostly my friends they don't give me advice.* Line 262: *I just tell them my problems and feel better.* Line 271–272: *like when I have maybe girl stuff I just tell them my problem.*

P4, Lines 265-266: *After school we practise aerobics. If not, we go to the park and chill.* Lines 270–271: *Weekends, sometimes we go to the mall, the Grove for ice skating. Sometimes get Chicken Licken.*

From the above statements it is clear that all participants relied on friends for support. Peer relationships provided participants with an environment in which they learned how to share and help each other, which may have contributed to their resilience. When choosing friends, the focus is mostly on social and economic status and a common set of shared values, including academic commitment.

P1, Line 301–302: *When we have common things that's how I choose my friends.* Lines 304–305: *... and their attitude, like checking their social status, so that I don't feel bad when they have things that I cannot have.*

P1's responses suggest that she prefers friends who are on the same socio-economic level as hers, and those who have a positive attitude. It appears that she avoids friends who have a better financial status to avoid peer pressure.

P2 Lines 210–212: *I choose friends. I don't just look at their faces. I see if they have bad backgrounds. Not like a family situation. If they are participating in class, things like that.*

P3 Lines 243–246: *I don't normally choose friends, but those friends that I have are like the popular girls and clever with schoolwork and all those things. Since I've been in primary we've been like that, even now in high school.* Line 248: *They are like the smartest girls in class.*

P4 Lines 242–243: *Uhm, I choose my friends ... I like friends who are outstanding in class. Not who are shy and stuff.*

P2, P3 and P4 chose friends who are actively participating in class and achieve good results, therefore, they surround themselves with friends who are achievers and have a positive influence on their academic success.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Environmental risks impact negatively on educational resilience across contexts

Table 4.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Theme 2

Subtheme	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Family risk factors	Any reference made regarding risk factors within the family	Any reference made regarding risk factors outside the family
School risk factors	Any remarks about risk factors at school	Remarks about risk factors outside the school

Community factors	risk	Any comments made concerning risk factors within in the community	Comments made concerning risk factors outside the community

4.3.2.1 Exposure to risk in the family

Although participants viewed their family environments as positive, they faced different challenges that could pose risks to their academic success, such as family conflict, lack of trust, and the much-needed private space at home.

- **Family conflict**

P1, Line 239: *My aunt must stop disrespecting my grandmother.* Line 241–243: *Because she is always insulting her, and I don't feel good, like she's an old person, but she doesn't deserve to be treated like that. They get along, but they have their fights.* Lines 245–246: *I could see my grandmother crying, eish, it makes me worry like why?* Lines 267–268: *Sometimes I feel like I don't think there is a family that fights like this, even when they don't agree on something.*

P2, Line 239: *They must stop shouting when I'm around reading, 'cause I always try to concentrate, but I don't get that space. When my family are arguing or shouting at me, I just keep quiet, listen to them; make sure I don't do what they think is wrong.*

McCue (2008) argues that children become obscured victims of family conflict, even when they are not directly involved, but they can be exposed by witnessing conflict between family members. Children experience conflict in a number of ways, including hearing verbal or physical abusive incidents, observing physical violence, as well as experiencing the consequences of the violence or conflict (McCue, 2008). Children who experience family conflict are at risk of developing poor coping strategies, distress, anger and anxiety (Lansford, 2009). Furthermore, they can develop psychological problems and display post-traumatic stress reactions, such as flashbacks, nightmares, intensified startled reactions, and constant worry about danger (Appleton, 2008). The effects of exposure to family conflict and violence can compromise healthy social relationships and academic achievement of children and

youth (Bostock, Plumpton & Pratt, 2009). Due to their observation of, or exposure to family conflict, some children may lose interest in their schoolwork and cannot concentrate (Allen, 2013).

Children can be resilient despite being exposed to family conflict (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Social networks with peers, siblings and extended family can buffer children from the impact of family conflict and help them to remain resilient and not develop maladaptive behaviour (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002; Kelly, 2007).

- **Lack of space and overcrowding**

Not having a place to study and doing homework in a noisy environment may not be conducive to learning. Privacy was an important issue for two participants. The lack of an own, private space to do schoolwork was a huge concern to some participants.

P2, Lines 175–177: My home. Not so good. I need space when reading, but I don't get it because I don't have a room. I share with my brother. Line 179: I need space.

P4, Lines 193–194: My home – it's a loud house because it's very busy. Lines 196–200: My granny is a tailor, so there's always people knocking bringing their clothes. So, I don't have that me-time because I'm sharing my bedroom with my little sister. So, it's not a supportive home environment for studying.

Living conditions like these, make it difficult for these adolescents to do their homework and to study.

P4, Lines 205–207: Hmm, a separate room and when I'm studying they should respect that I'm studying, 'cause maybe sometimes I'm studying there, and they just send me for stuff. Line 211: ... and [I] have to do it immediately.

It became evident that when limited space and lack of privacy interfere with academic success, it is important for participants to plan ahead to avoid disruptions. The

participants were able to access and utilise existing resources to manage the risk they were exposed to, e.g. to rather do their homework and study at the MJRR.

In this case, lack of privacy and quiet space to study at home have been overcome by utilising an existing community resource that offers exactly what they need. Alternatively, to wait for an opportune time to do their schoolwork at home, also indicates good problem-solving skills.

P2: Lines 192–195: *Most times when I go home my schoolwork is finished, I always come to the library [MJRR] to do work, if I'm not done, I do the work when the house is quiet early in the morning.*

P4 Lines 222–225: *For me to cope, I always come to the library, cause it's very quiet. When I'm here at the library, I can study and do my homework and go back home, so I won't mind them making noise.*

A dedicated study space is one of the most important tools for any learner. The results of several researchers found that learner performance is negatively affected by overcrowded households (Aaronson, 2000; Haurin, Parcel & Haurin, 2002). Housing quality and conditions have an influence on children's educational development and outcomes (Atkinson, 2008; Bramley & Karley, 2007; Marsh, 2004).

It appears that finding a quiet space at home to study or do homework, is a huge challenge for some participants, as captured below.

P3, Lines 230–232: *When it's my time, like maybe at least two hours, they should maybe stop, because we have a tenant and that tenant always opens his music very loudly.*

Trust is important in relationships, this is best illustrated by the following quote:

P3, Lines 186–187: *I want to earn more trust from my grandmother, 'cause my grandmother when I come home late ... Line 189... she thinks I'm not coming from the library.*

The fact that her grandmother does not trust her, may affect the frequency of her library visits and this may impact her study patterns, which in turn could have a negative effect on her academic achievement.

4.3.2.2 Experiences of risk within the school environment

- **Lack of additional educational support**

The main concern raised by all participants was the fact that the school did not provide extra lessons. Participants required more from their teachers and school in the form of additional classes and this was not provided. Longer time at school would provide an additional opportunity to study and complete homework. Learners could then go home with a sense of accomplishment, and be relieved of the stress to negotiate for space and the quietness they need to do these school-related activities.

The participants' comments illustrate how they feel about these matters:

P1, Lines 361–363: *Provide extra classes, because sometimes we don't understand and when we go to them [teachers], then they just don't have the time to help us.*

P2, Lines 264–266: *They [teachers] can be more patient, and they must open maybe extra classes because we don't have any in high schools. We only had them in primary.*

P3, Lines 317–319: *They should maybe be a little more patient with us, 'cause they are sometimes impatient with us. Yes, and also ... help children with work that they don't understand.*

P4, Lines 299–300: *They can all listen to other opinions and help whenever a child need help.*

The response from P4 suggests that the teacher's teaching approach is teacher-centred, which might be frustrating for P4. Teachers have to employ different teaching approaches, know the learning styles of their learners, and take this into account when planning their lessons. In this way, all learners will be accommodated in their classrooms. Rayneri, Gerber and Wiley (2006) suggest that an inflexible teaching style

and lack of learner involvement in lessons do not promote resilience, nor do they motivate learner achievement. I asked P4 if teachers helped them when they need help and her response was:

P4, Line 302–303: *Some don't. They're always busy, but we understand.*

When learners have a need for extra lessons and patience from teachers, it indicates that the schools they are attending lack functioning school support systems, good management, commitment from teachers and professional work ethics. Elliott and Crosswell (2001) noted that commitment entails that teachers have to be selfless and put learners first in executing their work. Some of the indicators of teacher commitment include, among others: sacrificing time and working outside working hours; assisting all learners, including those with special needs; making use of varied and learner-engaging methodologies (Elliott & Crosswell, 2001). According to Ellis (2010), a positive learning environment and additional educational support create a school culture that positions learners to be resilient to adversity, while unsupportive school environments place learners at risk to develop nonresilient behaviour to adversity. Teachers who work with the same learners for a long time have a greater chance of getting to know their learners better and should know how best to support them. It appeared that the changing of teachers happened regularly in P3's school. She raised a concern about being taught Mathematics by different teachers within a year:

P3, Lines 65–67: *Until I came to Grade 8, I just started going down in marks and the reason why I'm like that, I think it's because I'm changing Mathematics teachers all the time.* Line 75: *Like two or three.*

It seems there was a lack of stability with the frequent changing of Mathematics teachers. According to Borman and Dowling (2008) disadvantaged schools are negatively affected by high rates of teachers leaving their schools. Teachers leave very poor schools because of poor working conditions.

- **Sexual harassment**

Violence at school and when going to and from school, causes unsafe and threatening environments. It could lead to physical injury and emotional stress, and could be a barrier to the learners' academic achievement. Violence in schools can take different forms of intentional physical or verbal acts, such as, but not limited to robberies,

stabbings, bullying, rape, intimidation, sexual harassment, and physical assault (Burton, 2008; Jefthas & Artz, 2007). Furthermore, girls and boys experience school-based violence differently. Girls are inclined to be victims of sexual assault, harassment, and rape (Jefthas & Artz, 2007). This correlates with findings of this study.

P4, Lines 61–67: *Boys in my school are rude, if you don't want to talk to them they say ugly things to you, for example they can just say you are ugly and they were doing you a favour by talking to you. Sometimes they will touch you anywhere they like and if you say no, they can just clap you for that.*

P1, Lines 65–68: *The way boys in my school behave. The boys at school demand sex with girls even when they are not their girlfriend. If you refuse or ignore them, they swear at you. Sometimes I wish I was in a school where there are no boys.*

P3, Lines 44–45: *Boys in my grade like to touch girls on the buttocks and breasts and that is irritating and uncomfortable.*

Intimidation and violence is used to perpetuate sexual harassment.

P3, Line 47: *We are afraid because they will beat us after school on our way home.*

P1, Lines 71–72: *If you report them, they will harass you more and gang up on you, so the best thing is to ignore them.*

Normalisation of problems or risks is sometimes used as a coping strategy by victims. According to Burton (2008), the problem of not reporting incidents may be caused by a sense of shame, guilt, and fear of revenge attacks, secrecy, or even ineffective reporting procedures. In this study the participant was afraid of revenge attacks.

- **Corporal punishment**

Even though the South African Schools Act of 1996 Section 10(1) states that corporal punishment is illegal, most teachers in township schools still apply corporal punishment. All participants reported that corporal punishment was used as a form of discipline by their teachers.

P1, Lines 72–74: *What I also don't like is that if we don't submit projects or any schoolwork, most teachers beat us with a pipe.*

P2, Lines 51–55: *I walk to school, so I have to leave my house early to be at school early, if we come late the teachers beat us. Even for noise making, actually they beat us for doing wrong things. I was beaten by my teacher for coming late to school now I come early.*

P3, Lines 49–51: *I usually stay out of trouble because I don't want to be punished, but I see my classmates being beaten by teachers for not doing schoolwork.*

P, Lines 62–64: *Most of the time I get into trouble for noise-making. I have been beaten a few times with a pipe.*

The responses above indicate that their school does not have proper systems in place to deal with learner discipline and lack alternative forms of discipline. Administering corporal punishment could lead to learners staying away from school when they are late or didn't do their homework. In a worst-case scenario, it could lead to learner-teacher violence. Corporal punishment encourages and exemplifies violent behaviour in and to children and it contributes to the perpetuation of the violence to which learners are exposed (Burton, 2008).

4.3.2.3 Experiences of risk in the community

All participants described their community as being unsafe. This negative image was connected to specific unfavourable factors in the community, such as neighbourhood disorganisation and crime.

- **Neighbourhood disorganisation**

The prevalence of taverns in their community posed a challenge to three of the participants, with constant loud music being played and frequent fights among the customers. This affects their home studying.

P1, Lines 84–88: *In my street there are three taverns and they play their music loud until very late at night. Every weekend from Friday until Monday around ten at night they play music and every tavern play their music. Most times it is difficult to study during weekends.*

P2, Lines 59–62: *There are many taverns where I live, people get drunk, fight and there is a lot of noise, many people in the streets. The taverns play their music very high and they disturb us. You can't study and sleep well.*

The noise levels in her community also bothered P4. Interestingly, she didn't mention that the music from taverns disturbed her, but the noise from her neighbour beating drums did.

Lines 45–52: *My neighbour is a sangoma [traditional healer], she trains people to be sangomas. So, they beat drums, dance and sing and make a lot of noise. They don't do it every day, but sometimes it can happen two days in a row. Sometimes it is very early in the morning, or during the day, or very late at night. So the noise disturb my studies or my sleep sometimes.*

High noise levels affected the participants' sleep and their ability to study at home. Many youths living in similar conditions do not have alternative places to study or do homework. If they use a library, they have limited time because most community libraries close at 5.30 pm on weekdays and at 1.00 pm on Saturdays.

P3 shared her experience of a murder.

Lines 60–64: *Taverns are all over where I stay. They are dangerous because people fight and injure each other. Last year (sigh), my sister was shot in the head and died in a tavern not far from my home and the police haven't found the person who shot her. I'm afraid of taverns, it is not safe to go there.*

The participants' sense of safety in their neighbourhood has been reduced to feelings of anxiety and fear, which in turn may affect their concentration at school. Leoschut

and Burton (2006) described a disorganised neighbourhood as one with a high prevalence of violence, noise, easy access to drugs, alcohol and firearms, and high levels of crimes. From the statements above, it is apparent that the participants are exposed to high levels of violence, which may negatively affect their worldview.

- **Exposure to crime**

The issue of crime emerged in all participants' responses. Various risks in townships have snowball effect on one another (Masten, 2014; Rutter, 2011). For example, the availability of drugs and alcohol in the community can lead to people committing crimes, which can result in violence. The participants attributed crime in the community to nyaope users. Nyaope is a highly addictive and destructive drug that is widely available in South African townships.

P1, Lines 90–94: *Ja, it is also not safe. There are nyaope boys all over and they steal everything they can get their hands on, so they can buy drugs. My friends and I wait for each other when we come to school or go home because we are afraid of these boys, they take money or cell phones from schoolchildren.*

P2, Lines 62–67: *On our way to and from school we have to be aware of nyaope boys because if you walk alone they can take away your money or cell phone. So, before we come to the library we have to make sure that we have the group members so that we can walk together back home.*

P3, Lines 53–58: *Crime is high where I live. Nyaope boys steal things from other people's houses. In my home they stole our tap and a post box because it was metal. I think they sell the stuff to the metal scrap people and get money to buy nyaope. We don't find freedom to walk around the streets because they rob girls. We always walk in twos or more, never alone.*

P4, Lines 54–59: *It is not safe to walk in the streets alone even during the day because there are boys who smoke nyaope and they can injure you for a cell phone. They like to steal from people and houses. You must have people in the house; if they know that there is nobody in the house they can break in.*

The participants felt vulnerable on their way to and from school due to community challenges. These threats resulted in them not being able to move freely in their

community. In order to feel safe, they had to walk in groups as they were afraid of being robbed. Living in a dangerous neighbourhood could lead to parents or guardians restricting their children’s access to potentially enriching neighbourhood resources, such as libraries, extracurricular activities, and adult mentors because of concerns for their safety. Violence exposure in the form of being a witness or being victimised has negative psychological consequences for young people. Symptoms of depression, anxiety, conduct disorder and posttraumatic stress disorder have been found in adolescents exposed to violence (Ward, Martin, Theron, & Distiller, 2007; Fincham, Altes, Stein & Seedat, 2009).

4.3.3 Theme 3: Individual strengths contribute to educational resilience.

Table 4.5: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Theme 3

Subtheme	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Internal locus of control	Any reference made to attribution of educational success to self	Any reference made to attribution of educational success to others
Academic self-efficacy	Any mention of the belief to succeed academically	Any mention of not believing to succeed academically
Goal-setting	Any comments made regarding future goals	Comments not including goals
Positive use of time	Any remarks on engagement in extracurricular activities	Any remarks on engagement in non-extracurricular activities

4.3.3.1 Individual strengths

I examined the participant’s responses on information indicating individual strengths that positively impacted their academic success. It became apparent that they

possessed a few interrelated personal strengths that supported their success. These categories of strengths include: internal locus of control, self-efficacy, goal-setting, and the positive use of time.

4.3.3.2 Being self-driven with internal locus of control

Internal locus of control is a personality characteristic attributed to an individual's belief that they have power to have an effect on events and their outcomes as internally determined by their behaviour, as opposed to fate, luck or external circumstances (Sagone & Caroli, 2014). Individuals with an internal locus of control are more self-motivated and believe they have control over their behaviour and its consequences. References to internal locus of control were evident when participants indicated that they are in control of their success. They attributed their success to their own actions.

P1 shared that her success was dependent on:

Lines 43–45: *Extra effort into my work, I pay attention in class. If I don't understand I come to the library [MJRR] because they help us here.*

P2 reported that:

Lines 44–45: *Always listen in class and do all my work.*

P3 said:

Lines 32–33: *I attribute my success to paying attention and to going after what I want.*

P4 mentioned:

Line 41: *Concentration and studying hard.*

The participants' perspectives that they have a significant degree of control over their studies' outcomes, serve as encouragement for them to set goals and take remedial actions. They also take ownership of their success, and the effort bears fruit.

Three participants attributed their setbacks to their lack of effort, not working hard enough, and a lack of commitment to their studies.

P1 said:

Lines 61–63: *With Mathematics, I have to hear one thing many times. It's not like other subjects because I get them quickly, but I get extra help with Mathematics and I'm improving.*

P2 stated:

Lines 79–81: *I think most of my time I always play with my friends and every day when I come from school, I go to practise. I don't have time to study.*

P4 reported:

Line 76: *I think it's my lack of understanding.*

The learners took responsibility for their own failures. If individuals have internal locus of control, it becomes possible for them to plan and set personal goals.

4.3.3.3 Having sense of self-efficacy

Academic self-efficacy is defined as the self-assurance that one can flourishingly complete academic tasks, based on one's previous experiences and abilities (Mercer, Nellis, Martínez, & Kirk, 2011). All participants in this study demonstrated academic self-efficacy, which was captured in their responses.

P1 said:

Lines 97–99: *I perform very well at school, I get high marks in all subjects, but my Mathematics marks are not so high, that's why I work hard to improve the marks.*

Lines 103–104: *From Grade 1 ... my teacher would praise me that I'm one of the intelligent people in the class.*

Line 154: *When I fail at school I feel so bad.* Line 158: *I try to do better next time, I know I can do it.* Line 160: *I try to pull up my socks.*

Lines 162–163: *I look for help and I attend Mathematics classes here [MJRR].*

Lines 180–181: *I should always do that, when I fail I should try and like improve myself.*

P2 shared that:

Lines 132–133: *I failed a test, Mathematics one. I only failed the one. How I manage it; I pull my socks up.* Lines 135–136: *If I fail, I make sure that next time I work harder so that I can pass with good marks, I come to Mae Jemison to get help with Mathematics.*

I asked P2 how was her past performance, she said:

Lines 91–92: *It has been good. I've been getting level six, level seven.*

P3: said:

Lines 117–118: *I hardly fail tests, but this year I've been failing tests.* Line 120: *especially Mathematics tests.* Line 124: *... I'm doing well in term three.* Line 126: *I come here [MJRR] for extra classes.* Line 67: *In the past my performance was perfect, I can still do it.*

P4 stated:

Lines 111–114: *... like failing a test and stuff. Ja, I tried to study more and exclude myself from friends. Yes, that's how I deal with it and we come here and attend [classes at the MJRR]. They teach us English and Mathematics.* Lines 81-85: *In the past it was... I was performing well and then, when I came to Grade 8 it was lacking a bit because of change of schools, ja, and the teenage life, but I've passed two terms, I've done very well and want to improve my Mathematics marks.*

The participants believe they can achieve their educational goals based on past experiences of success or failure. They are pursuing ways to reach their goal to improve their Mathematics marks.

4.3.3.4 Goal setting

When I asked the participants what their personal goals, dreams, and future plans were, it was evident that they had the ability to set goals, plan for success, and navigate to resources that assist them in carrying out their plans and reaching their goals.

P1 commented about her long-term plan:

Lines 110–111: *Is to finish matric and pass it very well ... with high marks, go to university and study to become a pilot.*

P2 stated:

Lines 100–104: *My goals is to finish school, go to university. This year I really like to be selected by HPC [High Performance Centre, Tuks Sport], so that I can attend their school playing soccer and play professional football, but if I don't get the opportunity, study medicine and become a successful doctor.*

P3 said:

Lines 81: *My goal is to be an actor.* Line 83: *I just dream of having my own production.* Line 85: *and maybe an IT genius at the same time.*

P4 reported:

Lines 96–98: *My personal goals are to be successful in life, ja, actually I want to own my own clothing business and help my family.*

When the participants were asked how they will reach this goal, they responded by saying:

P1, Lines 119–121: *By listening to teachers, my parents and studying hard and asking for help when I don't understand.*

P2, Lines 113–115: *I really have to listen to my coach and my grandmother, and work hard to reach my goals, especially work hard on my Mathematics so that I get high marks.*

P3, Lines 87-89: *I'll reach these goals by talking to my parents, telling them what I need, study hard and find out more information about what I want to do.*

P4, Line 101: *Through education, studying for fashion design.*

Contrary to popular belief that learners from disadvantaged communities have low aspirations, the participants in this study had high aspirations. Each of the participants had the motivation to finish high school and pursue tertiary education. A strong outlook towards the future influences thoughts and behaviours, and provides a focus on attainment of prospective goals by using potential resources, rather than focusing on immediate gratification (Morales, 2010).

4.3.3.5 Positive use of time

Participation in extracurricular activities has positive effects on learners, including better attitudes toward school, higher rates of school completion, enriched social skills, and improved academic skills (Massoni, 2011). The participants in this study made productive use of their time and took advantage of opportunities and resources available to them.

P1, Lines 384–386: *Here at Mae Jemison centre there is a summer and winter programme and at our church there is a choir practise you know, we learn more about music like choir.* Lines 396-397: *We do many activities like uhm, they teach us subjects like Mathematics, English, things like that, and teach ballet.*

P2, Lines 32–33: *In soccer, I have gotten player of the tournament twice and I got a best performer at school.*

P3 is involved in a few activities, she mentioned:

Line 19: *I'm good at sports.*

I asked her in which sport she participated, she answered:

Line 21: *Aerobics and athletics.* Lines 284–285: *During weekends we come here at Mae Jemison centre for Mathematics classes.*

P4 also reported that she participated in more than one activity:

Line 30: *At school I like activities. I do sports.* Lines 332-333: *... the Mamelodi initiative winter jam. During winter they support us. They teach us English and Mathematics.*

It appears that participation in constructive after-school activities provided some additional structure and safety that may have further contributed to the participant's academic success. By being committed to the after-school activities, they also became committed to schoolwork.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I reported on the results obtained during my study. Literature was utilised to explain, substantiate, compare and contrast the findings of this study. The results were discussed in terms of the three main themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis of the interview transcripts.

CHAPTER 5: LITERATURE CONTROL, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, I address the research questions based on the thematic data analysis, address the adopted working assumptions for this study, and discuss the conceptual framework and conclusion. I further identify possible contributions of the study, discuss recommendations for future research, and list implications of the findings. I conclude the chapter with some personal reflections.

5.2 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FINDINGS AND EXISTING LITERATURE

5.2.1 SECONDARY QUESTION 1

5.2.1.1 Which protective factors (family, community and school) do township youth raised by grandparents attribute to their academic success?

According to the ecological systems theory, human development cannot be accurately analysed by observing only one person's behaviour. Bronfenbrenner (1979) claimed it requires the examination of interaction in more than one setting and features of the environment beyond the subject's immediate situation must be considered.

The findings of this study revealed that the main protective factor experienced in all systems was through experiences of care and support. Protective factors exist in all the developmental systems: In the family microsystem, the participants experienced emotional support, as well as open and clear communication; within the school microsystem, teachers who cared for them and showed support by assisting them with their schoolwork were tremendously helpful; support and care from their peer group microsystem also proved to be extremely valuable to the participants. Positive

relationships are of utmost importance to help learners achieve and continue to achieve academic success.

5.2.1.2 Experiences of support from the family

- **Emotional support**

The microsystem is the inner most system in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The family is embedded in this system. Looking at participants' relationship with their grandparents, it was evident that they had good and open relationships. Emotional support in the form of recognition of their academic achievements, encouraging words, and adult attention paid to their academic activities, motivated participants to believe that academic success was possible. They linked this type of support with feeling motivated, encouraged and reassured that someone important in their lives believed that they could make it. In the township environment, with stressors that are continually threatening healthy youth development, the consistent emotional support from grandparents is regarded as a protective factor for youths.

Open and clear communication with tolerance for each other's differences, mutual trust, and empathy create an environment conducive to sharing feelings caused by traumatic events and chronic stress (Walsh, 2012). Furthermore, in order to offset negative feelings and interactions after adverse events, it is imperative for families to foster positive attitudes (Sixbey, 2005).

Participants shared that they were able to express their needs, wants, and concerns to their grandparents. Open and clear communication in their families assisted them to talk about their challenges, thereby reducing the pressure of the stressors. They indicated that there was consistent and effective communication with their grandparents. Open and clear communication in families is a resilience factor. Relationships cannot be built and maintained without effective communication. During times of hardships and stress, relationships and regular communication within family members serve as vital resources and coping mechanisms (Walsh, 2012).

5.2.1.3 Experiences of support from the school

- **Caring and emotional support from teachers**

The school and the classroom are also part of the learner's microsystem. Protective factors that were identified in the family are similar to factors identified in the school environment.

According to Boynton and Boynton (2005), one of the most powerful ways to build positive relationships with learners is for teachers to demonstrate that they care. Some teachers showed an interest in the participants' academic performance and wellbeing. Barta (2010) states that teacher support is the amount of concern, help and friendship displayed towards learners.

In this study, P3 reported that her class teacher called her parents when she was not doing well academically, with the aim of assisting her to improve her marks. P1 mentioned a teacher who helped her when she needed something and who was always welcoming. Participants further reported that some teachers motivated them and encouraged them to do well in school.

Resilience research consistently points to the importance of positive and supportive teacher-learner relationships as a key protective factor (Johnson, 2008). An in-depth examination of this finding revealed that some teachers were enabling resilience. It also indicated that adult support is vital for learners to thrive and flourish. Caring teachers and meaningful relationships between teachers and learners have the potential to promote academic success. Learners who have positive relationships and are connected to their teachers demonstrate positive trajectories of development in both social and academic domains throughout schooling (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

- **Caring and emotional support from peers**

Gizir (2004) found that peer relationships have a positive influence on academic resilience. Participants in this study acknowledged the significance of peer relationships, the role friends played in their lives, and the positive influence of friends on their studies. Peers provided companionship, were playmates and were spending time with each other in collaborative activities. In addition, their friendships provided

trusting relationships and they were able to talk to each other about subjects they were not comfortable to discuss with their parents or grandparents. Learners who experience meaningful reciprocal actions and positive relationships with teachers, mentors and peers at school, manifest exceptional academic performance and commitment to school (Osterman, 2000).

Participants in this study formed a study group which served as a support system to share information. Participants reported that they chose friends who value learning and high academic achievement. It seemed that as a group, they had similar values towards education and showed commitment to succeed academically.

5.2.1.4 Experiences of support from the community

Although community members can have both positive and negative influences on children, participants in this study cited a few supportive relationships with community members. All participants mentioned at least one person in the community who they can go to for help with school work.

- **Access to information and academic support**

The Mae Jemison US Science Reading Room (MJRR) on the University of Pretoria's Mamelodi campus provided participants with library resources, internet services, computer literacy classes, career guidance, academic support, ballet lessons, and winter and summer programmes, which their school or family could not offer. In addition, the centre provided participants with constructive after-school activities, career guidance. Participation in after-school activities may support the academic success of youths, enrich their lives and help them to cope with stress (Thompson, Clark, & Walker, 2013).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), individuals are active participants who influence and are influenced by their environment. This interactive involvement between a person and his/her environment is compelling one to adapt to the conditions and restrictions of the context of development. Participants in this study were active participants in their environments through their individual strengths. The individual strengths and characteristics observed from the participants included:

- **Self-drive and internal locus of control**

Participants reported that they were self-driven and were able to regulate their behaviour to get good marks and pass their grades. An analysis of their actions and decision-making indicated that they demonstrated internal locus of control. They were not hindered by risks in their environment to achieve academic success. The manner in which they managed their academic setbacks showed maturity, as they took responsibility for getting low marks and did not blame it on external factors.

Individuals with an internal locus of control have high motivation for achievement and consequently perform better than individuals with external locus of control (Zaidi & Mohsin, 2013). Learners who can monitor and control their behaviour, emotions and thoughts throughout their school career are tactful and thoughtful learners. These learners capitalise on positive relationships with others, their own positive attitude, and constructive feedback from teachers, parents, peers, and use this to exercise self-regulation in order to actively take control of their learning process (Stubbs, 2001; Moore, 2006; Pajares, 2002).

- **Having a sense of self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is one's belief about whether you are capable of successfully completing a given task (Greene, 2017). It has an influence on the actions individuals choose to take to pursue their goals and their commitment to them. Self-efficacy also influences how much effort people are willing to put into such endeavours, how long they persevere in the face of challenges, their resilience to hardships, and the outcomes they expect from their efforts (Bandura, 2006).

Participants revealed that they found studying to be quite easy in primary school, but experienced it to be more challenging in high school. At high school level they needed to put in more effort to continue achieving good marks. Based on their past academic successes the participants were confident that they were able to get better marks in school. The results of this study indicated that they tended to work harder and persisted longer with tasks to achieve better marks. The finding that self-efficacy has a positive effect on all learners, including those at risk (Anthony & Jenson, 2005), held true in this study.

- **Goal setting**

Bandura (2006) reported that adolescents with self-efficacy are committed and set goals to provide them with purpose and a sense of accomplishment. The results of this study indicated that participants had short-term and long-term goals. Their short-term goal was to improve their Mathematics marks and their long-term goal was to pursue tertiary education. They had a strong orientation towards the future, which influenced their thoughts and behaviours and provided focus on the attainment of prospective goals and potential resources. They were motivated to succeed in school and earn good marks to support future goals.

- **Positive use of time**

In pursuit of their goals, participants used their time positively by engaging in extracurricular activities sponsored by the MJRR. Involvement in extracurricular activities is a voluntary act that presupposes some level of motivational characteristics on the part of the participants. Research indicates that participation in extracurricular activities in high school is a strong predictor for motivating learners to graduate (Randolph, Rose, Fraser, & Orthner, 2004).

5.2.2 SECONDARY QUESTION 2

5.2.2.1 Which risk factors do township youth raised by grandparents experience in their developmental environment (family, community and school)?

The findings revealed that, while there was a strong commonality in identified risks across the participants' microsystems, they experienced and prioritised the effects of some of the risks differently.

5.2.2.2 Exposure to risk in the family

Participants mentioned exposure to risk within their family system, which threatened their academic success. It emerged that their experiences of family risk factors differed

according to how it affected them and their ability to resile, as indicated in the following paragraphs.

- **Family conflict**

Family conflict was identified as a risk factor by two participants of this study. One participant reported that conflict at home affected her level of concentration at school (cognitively). The other participant said when her aunt fights with her grandmother, it saddens her (emotionally). It is evident that participants were affected by exposure to conflict between family members, even when they were not directly involved.

Family conflict may cause avoidant, resistance and disorganised insecure attachment styles and increase interpersonal struggles (Sori, 2007). Attachment problems may lead to poor communication with others and to conflict in future relationships (Ben-Ami & Baker, 2012).

Participants did not explain how family conflict as a risk factor affects their academic success. Since the present study did not focus on understanding the relationships between specific risk factors and expected positive developmental outcomes, the findings can only testify to the experiences of the participants.

The results indicated that academic success is related to, but not determined by the dynamics in one's family environment. The findings indicate that the participants are highly motivated individuals and may have developed positive coping strategies regardless of their domestic circumstances. Additionally, I suggest that family support as a protective factor would buffer the effects of conflict in the family as a risk factor.

- **Lack of space and overcrowding**

Overcrowded houses and poor housing conditions impact negatively on children's educational development and outcomes. This can perpetuate a cycle of poverty and threaten their socio-economic status later in life, since their prospects of employability determine where they can reside as adults (Bramley & Karley, 2007; Lubell & Brennan, 2007; Evans, 2006).

Living in an overcrowded house affects various aspects of children's lives. It could affect school attendance, lead to catching illnesses which can hinder their daily routine and also disrupt their schooling (Lanús, 2009; Saegert & Evans, 2003; Solari & Mare, 2012; Leventhal & Newman, 2010, Evans, 2006; Jaine, Baker & Venugopal, 2011). Without a comfortable, quiet space, it can be difficult to study, read and do homework, and it can affect school results negatively. Participants in this study yearned for a private space where they could study and do schoolwork.

Two participants were challenged by lack of personal space in their homes. Insufficient space and overcrowding in the home environment affected the participants' ability to study and do homework at home. Having little or no personal space to study at home, lead to participants having to spend most of their time outside their homes to study and do homework at an alternative venue.

One participant reported that her home was not conducive to studying as her grandmother ran a tailoring business from home. When she was at home she had to help her grandmother in attending to her customers. In this case, the grandmother was contributing to the risks experienced by the participant in that her studying time was disrupted and interrupted by being sent around to help customers.

5.2.2.3 Experiences of risk within the school environment

- **Lack of additional educational support**

The National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 states that teachers should demonstrate an ability to develop an empowering and supportive learning environment for learners and respond to their educational and other needs. This study found that there is no extra academic support for learners in the participants' school.

- **Sexual harassment and sense of helplessness**

Participants reported that peer-to-peer sexual harassment was rife in their school. Findings of this study indicate that although participants said that they abhorred the sexual harassment and that it produced negative feelings, they nevertheless did not report the behaviour in fear of being physically harmed by the perpetrators. Their silence and fear is disturbing and resembles the behaviour that adolescent girls witness in their homes when women are continuously subjected to domestic violence but don't do anything about it (Humphreys & Campbell, 2010).

According to Burton (2008), in most cases learners do not report incidents of violence due to several reasons including embarrassment, fear, the belief that school authorities will not follow up on the report, and the belief that the incident was not worthy of reporting. Furthermore, other learners are discouraged by the fact that those who did report these violations were often threatened with violence (Burton, 2008).

Learners in this study demonstrated helplessness and defeat regarding this form of violence and intimidation. This subtheme highlights the helplessness of a girl in an environment where male domination is seen as normal. Participants were aware of what is right and wrong, but they felt powerless to assert themselves and to stand up against sexual harassment. Even teachers were not seen as a form of support.

- **Corporal punishment**

In the South African context where practices of violence have become normalised (Burton, 2008), it is particularly difficult for young people to speak out against corporal punishment. The results of this study revealed different perceptions from participants regarding the use of corporal punishment. P1 disliked corporal punishment; P4 had been punished a few times for noisemaking, although corporal punishment had not prevented her from repeating the misconduct; for P2 corporal punishment deterred her from arriving late at school; and P3 stayed out of trouble for fear of being punished. They did not approve or disapprove of the use of corporal punishment as a form of discipline. From their responses, this form of punishment did not necessarily deter participants from future misconduct, but, if it did, the deterrence was anchored in the fear of physical pain leading to possible trauma (physical, emotional, and/or social).

5.2.2.4 Experiences of risk in the community

- **Neighbourhood disorganisation**

Youths in a township environment are exposed to many challenges emanating from existing social, political, and economic adversities (Dass-Brailsford, 2005).

The social impacts of taverns, as identified in this study, included constant loud music, people making a noise in the streets, frequent fights, and even murder. The lack of legislative control over operating hours and the density and location of taverns, were found to contribute to the disturbances that made it difficult for participants to study at home. One participant said there were three taverns in her street. As a result of high noise levels, participants couldn't study or do homework at home during the evenings.

- **Crime**

According to Natarajan, crime and drugs are related because of the sequelae they have on the user's behaviour and by precipitating violence and other illegal activities relating to drug trafficking (Natarajan, 2010). Drug users targeted schoolchildren by robbing them of their cell phones and pocket money. This led to participants feeling unsafe and fearing to walk alone to and from school and the MJRR. This fear of being robbed also restricted their movements in the community. Even though the perpetrators (nyaope boys) were known for their criminal activities, they were not being arrested or removed from the streets, instead, they were left to continue terrorising schoolchildren. This risk factor indicates that not much is being done to protect schoolchildren from the hostile community they live in. They have to find strategies to protect themselves from the daily risk of being robbed, e.g. to walk in a group to protect each other. This shows that they can only rely on themselves for protection and not on adults or government organisations, e.g. police.

5.2.3 PRIMARY QUESTION

5.2.3.1 *Which resilience contributory factors are essential for the academic success of township learners raised by grandparents?*

The study was based on one main research question and two subquestions. In answer to the main research question, I draw from the two subquestions that I have already addressed, but mainly focus on the main research question. The study showed that the resilience factors which contributed to the academic success of the participants are the following: experiences of support from the family, school and peer microsystems, and the community. The study showed that certain forms of support were preferred more by participants and attributed to their success.

Within the family system, participants appreciated the emotional support from their grandparents and parents, and preferred to engage in communication that is clear and congruent (Walsh, 2003). Findings confirm that grandparents provided them with a safe and consistent home environment. Family protective factors like affection, cohesion, and emotional support shaped the participants' ability to bounce back in the face of risk (Seccombe, 2002).

Within the school environment, certain teachers showed caring and emotional support in several ways, such as motivating and encouraging learners and developing positive teacher-learner relationships with them. Previous research reveals that teacher support, a positive learning environment, learner involvement in lessons and tasks promote positive educational outcomes (Patrick, Ryan, & Kaplan, 2007).

Peer support was a source of encouragement and support for continuing to overcome academic obstacles. Peers also acted as study partners, playmates, and security for one another as they always walked in groups to be safer in their neighbourhood. Peer relationships provided a forum for participants to process stress, as it allowed them to express themselves and to discuss issues that they may not feel comfortable to discuss with others (Milteer, Ginsburg, & Mulligan, 2012).

The quality of peer relations is considered to be the key element of social competence in childhood and adolescence, according to Diener and Kim (2004). Social competence with peers includes effective social interactions. Within the community, all participants had at least one community member to rely on for help with schoolwork. Having someone outside the family to turn to for support is important for a child (Theron & Theron, 2010). A connection with one competent caring adult in the family or community is a factor associated with resilience (Masten, 2001). In addition, all participants had access to information and academic support through the MJRR programmes. These community support systems contributed to participants' resilience by being available to them and providing protective resources.

Participants' resilience was also nurtured by individual strengths within themselves, such as internal locus of control, self-efficacy, goal-setting and the positive use of time. Participants were aware of their struggles with Mathematics, violence within their school, crime and high noise levels in their community that had the potential to affect

their academic success. They became instrumental in controlling elements in their environments. They actively sought for helpful adults in their communities and at school, attended extra Mathematics classes, and used the MJRR to study and do homework. Help-seeking adds to the value of classroom instruction (Karabenick, 2004) and it is a vital coping and self-regulatory plan of action that contributes to learners' studies (Newman, 2000). Participants were goal-setters who worked hard towards obtaining high marks, were involved in positive extramural activities, and actively tried to avoid negative experiences. They were focused and did everything they deemed necessary to achieve academic success.

In respect of academic success, the impact of factors on academic outcomes from one ecological may depend on the presence or absence of influences from other ecological levels. Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues that, the capacity of one system (family, school or community) to function effectively, depends on the quality of and social connections with other systems. This study found that there were several family, school, and community risk and protective factors, including individual strengths related to participants' resilient functioning across academic and behavioural areas.

Participants experienced challenges in the following areas: within the family system: family conflict, lack of space, noise, interruptions when doing homework, and overcrowding; within the school system: lack of additional educational support, sexual harassment, and corporal punishment; within the community: loud music from taverns, noise from neighbours, and crime. They were able to be resilient by drawing on protective factors that helped to overcome the effects of these stressors. These protective factors were a combination of personal strengths (internal locus of control, self-efficacy, goal-setting and the positive use of time and abilities), protective factors in their homes (emotional and financial support, and clear and congruent communication), protective factors at school (caring and emotional support from teachers and peers), and protective factors in their community (access to information, academic support, and a place to study and do homework).

Findings indicated that none of these components are sufficient in isolation to produce the academic success demonstrated by participants in the study. All these factors were found to contribute to a learner's potential to demonstrate resilience. There is no dictatorial formula for academic success. Individual's environments have a powerful

impact on their ability to attain their academic potential. Academic success is thus affected by factors within the individual and their environment. Academic success is an important outcome of resilient behaviour and is regarded as an achievement of a developmental task (Dass-Brailford, 2005).

The resilience factors found to be essential for the academic success of township learners raised by grandparents were accessed through the dynamic, interactive process where participants navigated towards the ecology for protective resources and where the ecology reciprocated by making such resources available (Ungar, 2010). Participants in this study were indeed resilient, they were able to identify risk factors present in their environments (see Figure 5.1), overcame stressors, displayed confidence that they will achieve their goals, engaged in activities to improve their marks, and most importantly, they identified resources and negotiated with their environment as to which resources could assist them to overcome the adversities they experienced (Ungar, 2008). It should also be noted that the academic success of this group of learners should not be accepted as evidence that the township school environment offers quality education.

In conclusion, it was interesting to observe that the participants knew what to do to achieve success and where to go for such support. But, when they experienced sexual harassment and fear of being robbed, they did not seek adult support but relied on each other. They were afraid to report the sexual harassment because they feared to be physically harmed by the perpetrators, and they didn't trust the police would do anything about the robberies. Regarding the risk of sexual harassment, which was mostly experienced in the school microsystem, they didn't approach teachers for support, instead, they supported each other as peers. Similarly, with the experience of crime (nyaope boys) in the community, they also relied on each other as peers. This study shows that participants mostly relied on peer support regarding risk factors concerning their safety, especially from boys.

5.4 ADDRESSING THE WORKING ASSUMPTIONS

The current study had several initial working assumptions, which will be discussed to see whether they hold up against the findings of the study. The initial working assumptions are:

- Academically successful learners are resilient.
- Specific protective factors at home, school, and in the community contribute to the learners' academic success and resilience.
- Learners are exposed to more adversity as a result of being raised in an informal settlement township and in a grandparent-headed family.

Participants of this study were from a low socio-economic status and lived in residential areas that are generally associated with poverty and criminal activities. Schools in the area where the study was conducted were poor and had limited or non-existent resources (Mampane & Bouwer, 2011), which placed the participants at risk of academic failure.

As far as the first assumption above is concerned, participants had access to a combination of protective factors, which included personal and environmental factors. They were not fixated on the hardships they had to overcome, but directed themselves to supportive resources and attained good marks at school. The results

of this study support the first working assumption, therefore, it can be concluded that participants were academically successful and resilient.

The findings of this study also concur with the second research assumption, since they confirm the existence of protective factors in the home, school and community of the participants. Supportive relationships and access to the MJRR's resources played a significant part in the participants' academic success.

The third working assumption partially supported the findings. The results pointed out that participants were exposed to adversities as a result of typical township risks, e.g. poverty, violence, inferior education, and the HIV/Aids pandemic, often linked to the legacy of the apartheid era (Theron, 2007), not because they were raised in grandparent-headed families. On the contrary, the relationship between participants and their grandparents was described by all participants as positive and they felt secure in the care of their grandparents.

5.5 ADDRESSING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 5.1 was adapted to correspond with the specific risk factors faced by the study participants and the protective factors utilised to mitigate the risks in their lives. The conceptual model highlights risk factors faced by township youths across multiple ecosystemic contexts (family, home, school and community). The model further illustrates that youths function resiliently and achieve academic success when they access their individual protective resources, family-based protective resources and community-based protective resources.

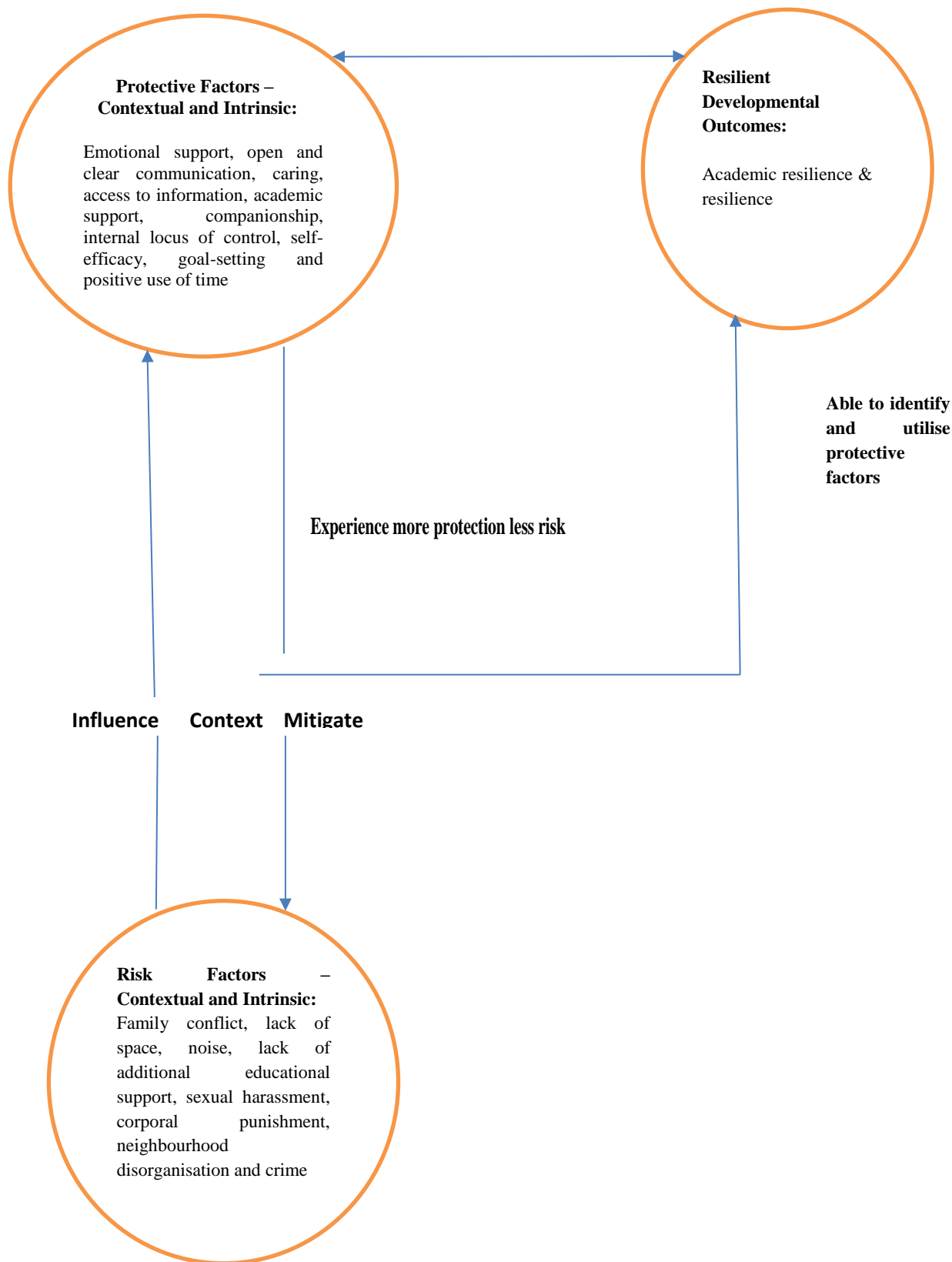


Figure 5.1 Resilience Factors and Developmental Outcomes for Youths in a South African Township Context (Adapted from Mampane, 2012)

The conceptual framework indicates that the context of the child's development is characterised by both risk and protective factors. Although the family provided protection to participants, there were also some risks that threatened their academic success, e.g. lack of space to study, conflict and noise. Similarly, there were also protective and risk factors at the school, e.g. teacher support was seen as a protective factor, while lack of additional academic support, sexual harassment, and corporal punishment were risk factors. The community also contained protective and risk factors, e.g. the MJRR and supportive adults in the community were protective factors, while crime and noise levels were risk factors. However, peer relationships seem to be crucial for these participants – they look out for each other and care about each other. The role of grandparents is seen as that of providing stability, shelter (home), love, support (emotional), and the freedom to seek opportunities to excel. The last two protective factors were crucial for the academic resilience of the participants.

5.6 POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

Findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on resilience by broadening research on protective factors across several contexts. It provides an understanding of ways in which the family, school and community environments contribute to the academic resilience of township youths raised by grandparents, as well as ways in which the youths contribute to their own academic resilience from their own perspective.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There were a few limitations in conducting this research. Firstly, the fact that there were only female participants meant that the findings of this study may not apply to males. Secondly, the sample comprised of learners aged 13 and 14 – this means that the findings offer a limited perspective of only this age group. Lastly, the results were gathered from a small percentage of the South African youth population and the research was also context specific (only in a township) and that is not representative of South African youths as a whole. This has implications for the generalisation of these results to other contexts because the results could be different in other contexts.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Three recommendations are made for future research. Firstly, a representative sample of youth to allow for generalisation across contexts is recommended. Such a study may help to analyse data using comparable or different patterns. Secondly, a longitudinal research design which follows township youths from Grade 8 to 12 would be informative. Such a design will help to provide an in-depth understanding of the contribution of protective factors from school, family, communities and peers over time to enhance educational resilience. Thirdly, examining academic resilience among male township youths would also collect valuable information that would add to the understanding of the factors involved in developing resilience across genders.

5.9 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The results of this study indicate several possible actions that teachers and school leaders can take to increase the academic success of township youths. This study can also serve as a platform to foster resilience in all learners, especially township learners.

- Township schools' management teams should develop school policies that promote warm, supportive school climates and opportunities for all learners to achieve academic success.
- Township school leaders should offer extracurricular activities to help learners manage their time better (schedule their activities), promote their relationships with peers and teachers (develop good interpersonal skills), and give them an opportunity to benefit from the hidden curriculum: a curriculum that is conveyed indirectly without aware intent (Jerald. 2006) associated with participating in extracurricular activities, e.g. learn values, attitudes, beliefs and obey rules.
- Schools should offer additional educational support to all learners, e.g. extra classes.

5.10 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

When I undertook this study, I didn't know much about resilience. The findings of this research were extremely informative and useful to me as a teacher in a township school, and as a researcher. Reading extensively about resilience and reflecting on resilience stories and practices, have changed the way I interact with my learners and the way I prepare my lessons. I have learnt that the role that teachers play in the classroom has the potential to reach through and beyond the implementation of the curriculum. The interviews with the participants also opened my eyes to what learners think and about what helps to motivate them to succeed. I also obtained a clearer understanding of the types of teacher practices that they felt had a major impact on their academic success.

As a researcher, I learned about qualitative research and found the process of research interesting and intriguing. Collecting qualitative data through interviews taught me interviewing skills. Analysing the data was time consuming and frustrating at times, but overall the journey has been fulfilling.

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DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. The answers you give will be kept confidential. If you have any questions, please direct them to the researcher.

Personal Information

Participant Number _____ (to be filled in by the researcher)

1. Age? _____
2. Sex: (please circle one) Male/ Female

Educational Information

3. What is your current grade? _____
4. Where is your school situated? (Informal settlement/ formal part of the township)

5. Did you repeat any grade? _____ (Yes/No)
6. If yes, which grade? _____
7. Do you rely on the feeding scheme for lunch? (Yes/No/Sometimes)

8. What are your current marks in the following subjects? (To be filled in by the researcher)

English _____ Mathematics/Maths Literacy _____ Life Orientation _____

Home Information

9. Who did you live with? (Please check all that apply).

_____ Mom _____ Dad _____ Number of siblings

_____ Grandmother _____ Grandfather _____ Number of aunts

_____ Number of uncles _____ Number of cousins _____ other (list)

10. Who is the head of your family? _____

11. How many people are working in your home? _____

12. Do you receive a child support grant? (Yes/No) _____

a. If yes, how much do you receive? _____

b. If no, why? _____

13. Does your family rely on social grant for the family's needs? (Yes/No) _____

14. How many people receive social grants in your family? _____

15. What do you estimate to be your families overall monthly income? _____

16. Do you live in a (Low cost housing house/ own built house/shack) please circle one answer.

Thank you for your participation in my study!

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Instructions to the participant:

I am going to ask you a number of questions. Please be as honest as you can. The information conveyed to the researcher is confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Your name of the research participants will not be used in the research study.

Personal attributes of the individual

1. How are you succeeding in school?
2. Do you have personal goals and dreams that you should like to realize? What are they?
3. How will you reach these goals? Who/what will help you?
4. How do you feel when you have mastered something?
5. Can you tell me of a time when you demonstrated determination and perseverance?
6. Have you had any setbacks? Can you tell me a story of how you have dealt with them?
(prompt: fail a test)
7. Are there any particular persons or things that help you to be successful in school?

FAMILY

8. With whom in your family do you have the best relationship? Why?
9. Do you have someone in your family that you regard as supportive towards your schoolwork, interests or social life?
10. How, if at all, is your relationship with your guardian positively influencing your academic success in school?
11. Do you consider your lifestyle at home good or bad? Why?

12. Tell me about things you do to help you cope (Prompt: family issues, arguments & conflicts).
13. What kinds of things do you enjoy doing with your family?

PEER, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

14. How do you choose friends?
15. Do you have at least one or two friends who you like a lot and can count on when you need help or advice?
16. What do you do with your friends at school, after school and during weekends?
17. How does your school help you get such good academic results?
18. Is there any school staff member/s who are contributing or contributed to your academic success in school? If so how?
19. Describe your relationship, if any, with a school staff member who is contributing or contributed to your academic success.
20. In your opinion, what are some things teachers can do to help students be more successful in school?
21. Are there any community members (friends, leaders, neighbours, etc.), who contribute or contributed to your academic success. If so how?
22. Are there any community organizational/institutions/services (religious institutions, recreational facilities, youth organizations, child care services, etc.) that help or helped influence your academic success? If so how?
23. Can you name one person outside of your family (e.g., teacher, church member, family friend) who has had a very positive influence on you? What do you admire or like about him/her?
Is there anything else you would like to add? Any questions?

Thank you for participating in this study

APPENDIX C: Participants' studying environment and an example of their living environment



University of Pretoria Mamelodi Campus



Participants' living environment

APPENDIX D: Sport and academic medals won by one of the participants





UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Research Assent Form

Dear Learner

My name is Lindiwe S. Shole and I am currently studying M.Ed. degree in Learning Support at the University of Pretoria. I am asking your permission to take part in this research study. The aim of this research is to investigate and understand what influences educational success of children raised by grandparents.



What is a research study?

A research study is a way in which researchers find out information about a particular topic. Research studies help us to reach an understanding or development of solutions to problems or cases.



What would happen if I join this research?

If you decide to be in the research, I would ask you to do the following:

- Fill out a demographic questionnaire about your personal, educational and home information;
- Some of you will participate in semi-structured interview; interviews are one on one talks to get to know you better and understand how you are able to make it, the interview will be tape recorded;
- The amount of time required for your participation will be approximately 1 hour for a day during afternoons at Mae Jemison in the University of Pretoria Mamelodi campus spread over 1-2 weeks. It will be divided like this:

Day 1: Consent / assent forms (approximately 1 hour)

Day 2: Interviews (approximately 1 hour / 30 minutes per interview)



Can I say no?

- You get to decide if you want to take part.
- You are under no obligation to take part in this study.
- You can say 'No' or you can say 'Yes'.
- No one will be upset if you say 'No'.
- If you say 'Yes', you can always say 'No' later.
- If at any point during the study you wish to withdraw from the study, you are allowed to do so and your decision will not affect your participation in the centre.



Will I be harmed?

There are no expected discomforts or dangers to you in this study.



Is there anything else?

If you want to be in the research after we talked, please write your name below. This shows we talked about the research and that you want to take part.

Name of Participant

(To be written by child/adolescent)

Signature of Researcher

Signature of Supervisor

Shole L.S (student)

Dr. Ruth Mampane (supervisor)

Date

Date



Faculty of Education

INFORMATION TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CAREGIVERS

Dear Parents/ Guardians/ Caregivers

My name is Lindiwe S. Shole and I am currently studying MEd degree in Learning Support at the University of Pretoria. Your permission is being sought to have your child participate in this research study. The purpose of this research is to investigate and understand what influences educational resilience in children raised by grandparents.



What will your child do?

- Your child will be asked to fill in a demographic questionnaire
- The aim questionnaire will be able to tell me their personal, educational and home information
- Some of the children will be asked to take part in one on one tape recorded interviews; this will help me to understand them better and to know how they are able to be strong and make it at school
- All the activities will be done after school and at the Mae Jemison Reading Room at the University of Pretoria Mamelodi campus
- The amount of time required for your child's participation will be approximately 3 hours spread over a week (day 1 will take about 1 hour 30 minutes and day 2 the same amount of time (1 hour 30 minutes)



Will the children be given a chance to read about their interviews?

After the interviews, I will write word for word what they said in the interview what we call transcribe. This will take time, when I am done I will come back to the University of Pretoria and meet with the children. I will give them their interviews to read and comment on them. I will write down their comments and if they ask me to delete something I will do so.



Will my child be harmed?

There are no foreseeable discomforts or dangers to either you or your child in this study.



What if my child changes her mind?

If at any point during the study you or your child wishes to terminate the session, he/she will be allowed to do so. Your child will not be punished for changing his/her mind.



How will you make sure that what my child tells you remain a secret?

All records are kept confidential and will be available only to professional researchers and staff. If the results of this study are published, the data will be presented in group form and individual children will not be identified.

Name of parent/guardian/caregiver

**Shole L.S (student)
(supervisor)**

Dr. Ruth Mampane

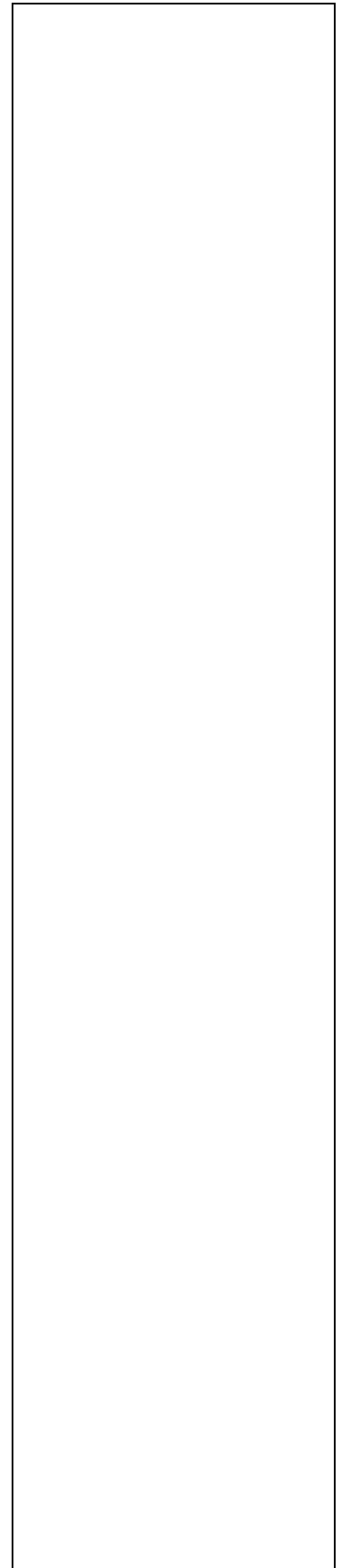
Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Supervisor

Date

Sandi: Good afternoon, we are going to start with the interview now. Firstly I want to remind you that the information you are going to give me is confidential and will be used for this study only. Your name or identification will never be used. Only a pseudo name or number will be used. Secondly I am reminding you that you can stop participating in the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable or you can decline to answer any question that you don't want to answer. Do you understand what I've just



explained?.....
.....
.....

Nikiwe: Mmm

Sandi: Ok. Now question one, what are you good at? At home, community or school?

Nikiwe: At home, I'm good at cooking sometimes it depends on what I'm cooking.

Sandi: Jah

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok, at school?

Nikiwe: I can see all subjects, but except maths.

Sandi: Ok.

Nikiwe: Especially English.

Sandi: Ok, you are very good, I can tell you are... so what are your successes? What have you done that you can say, "you know what I have done this successfully and I have nailed it"?

Nikiwe: Uhm, I can say my school work. When I have passed very well I become so proud and happy, I can say it is that uhm...

Sandi: Passing a grade.

Nikiwe: Jah, passing a grade and with high marks. Jah.

Sandi: Ok, so what do you...what or who do you attribute your success to?

Nikiwe: I don't understand the question

Sandi: When you... your success like you're saying passing you know your successes have been passing and stuff like that. Who or what do you think has helped you to pass?

Nikiwe: I think I put extra effort into my work, I pay attention in class. If I don't understand I come to the library because they help us here (Mae Jamison)

Nikiwe: I can say my grandmother

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: She is always telling me when I fail not to give up, one day I will be successful one day I'll do it better I will do better next time.

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: So I didn't give up most of the times because I know that I'm lucky, because some of the children who don't have food who don't have a place to stay so I feel so lucky. Jah.

Sandi: Ok, so your grandmother helps you to be, to feel secure?

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok, so what do you struggle with in the home or in the community or school?

Nikiwe: At school I struggle with maths.

Sandi: what do you think makes you struggle?

Nikiwe: with maths, I have to hear one thing many times. It's not like other subjects because I get them quickly, but I get extra help with maths and I'm improving.

Sandi: Ok, what else?

Nikiwe: the way boys in my school behave. The boys at school demand sex with girls even when they are not their girlfriend. If you refuse or ignore them they swear at you. Sometimes I wish I was in a school where there are no boys.

Sandi: Ok you struggle with that but do you report this to the teachers?

Nikiwe: : No, if you report them they will harass you more and gang up on you, so the best thing is to ignore them. What I also don't like is that if we don't submit projects or any school work, most teachers beat us with a pipe.

LOC

Family support(motivation & encouragement)

family support(security and stability)

Help seeking behaviour

School risk (bullying/sexual harassment)

Sandi: Ok, in the community?

Nikiwe: Most of the time I don't participate in sports, like especially netball.

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: I don't think I can play netball because I'm not good.

Sandi: Ok, but how is your community? Is your community uh a quiet place or is it noisy, does it affect you're learning or stuff

Nikiwe: Sometimes in most homes like

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: In my street there are three taverns and they play their music loud until very late at night. Every weekend from Friday until Monday around ten at night they play music and every tavern play their music. Most times it is difficult to study during weekends.

Community risk (high noise levels)

Sandi: Ok, so in your community there is a lot of noise

Nikiwe: Jah, it is also not safe. There are nyaope boys all over and they steal everything they can get their hands on so they can buy drugs my friends and we wait for each other when we come to school or go home because we are afraid of these boys, they take money or cell phones from school children.

Community risk (crime)

Sandi: so you have to walk in groups to feel safe. Ok, so what is your performance at school?

Nikiwe: I perform very well at school, I get high marks in all subjects but my maths marks are not so high that's why I work hard to improve the marks

Sandi: Ok, in the past at primary?

Nikiwe: Jah I was good

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: From grade one like my teacher would praise me that I'm one of the intelligent people in the class jah

Self-efficacy

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: And my mother and grandmother would be so proud of me

Sandi: Mmm ok, so what are your personal goals and dreams and what are your future plans?

Nikiwe: Is to finish matric and pass it very well with high marks, go to university and study to become a pilot.

Future goals

Sandi: And how will you reach this goal?

Nikiwe: By listening to teachers, my parents and studying hard and asking for help when I don't understand

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: Uhm always trying but not to give up, when I fail I should not give up I should always try and do better next time

Sandi: Ok, so for you to reach this goals who or what will help you?

Nikiwe: Uhm I think I have to work hard in mathematics & by listening to teachers, my parents and studying hard and asking for help when I don't understand.

Problem solving and help seeking

Sandi: Mmm... but who will help you or what will help you?

Nikiwe: Kamogelo I think she is the one who will help me because she always helps me with maths

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: And my grandmother encourages me not to give up

Family support(encouragement)

Sandi: Ok alright, so now tell me how do you feel when you have succeeded or mastered something?

Nikiwe: I feel so proud I feel like I'm the luckiest girl

Sandi: And clever neh (Laughing) ok you feel proud. Ok who is your role model? Do you have a role model?

Nikiwe: Jah in think I have one

Sandi: You have and who is your role model

Nikiwe: I forgot her surname

Sandi: You forgot the surname ok

Nikiwe: She grew up in a family where she lived with her grandmother and her mother, they were five or six and there was not enough money to like they could not get the clothes they wanted but she succeeded she managed to be a pilot now today she is a successful pilot. I feel like

Sandi: Is she a South African?

Nikiwe: She is a South African

Sandi: Oh ok, is she black or white?

Nikiwe: She's a black person

Sandi: Oh is it, ok that's good, ok alright that's nice. Ok so she is your role model?

Nikiwe: Jah

Family communication

Self confidence in ability

Sandi: Ok. So tell me what do you do when things do not go your way?

Nikiwe: Sometimes I just cry or talk to someone about my problem especially my granny

Sandi: Ok. Have you struggled with something or had setbacks or especially at school or home or community or with friends? And for example if you fail a test like at school, so have you struggled with something?

Nikiwe: Jah when I fail at school I feel so bad

Sandi: Mmm, so how do you manage those setbacks? When you have setbacks whether it's at school or at home or in the community how do you deal with setbacks?

Nikiwe: I try to do better next time, I know I can do it.

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: I try to pull up my socks

Sandi: how do you pull your socks?

Nikiwe: I look for help and I attend maths classes here (Mae Jamison)

Sandi: Ok, uhmmm the next question is, tell me about yourself what makes you the person that you are today?

Nikiwe: Uhm my family and my grandmother they always tell me to do the best, that I should not doubt myself, I'm the best

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Mmm ok, so what gives you joy in life?

Nikiwe: Doing things I like

Sandi: Like what?

Nikiwe: You know sometimes maths is very eish, a challenge for me

Sandi: Jah

Nikiwe: But when like my friends and me try to do better I feel like good

Sandi: So uhm if you struggled with something and then you eventually get it right it makes you feel good?

Nikiwe: Jah, I should always do that, when I fail I should try and like improve to myself

Confidence in own abilities

Family support
(encouragement)

Sandi: You know you talk to her about anything she tells you

Nikiwe: She understands every situation, like (Zulu 11:41)

Sandi: Ok, uhm who has always been there for you?

Nikiwe: My grandmother

Sandi: Your grandmother. So who can you turn to when you need help?

Nikiwe: My grandmother

Sandi: Explain why your grandmother in particular?

Nikiwe: Because she is always there for me

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: Like she sits down with me and tells me don't feel bad about yourself, you know like but you are a good person. Jah

Family support

Sandi: So she encourages you

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok she gives you advice when you are not feeling good about something. Right so we will go to the next section, which talks about your family. So who in your family do you relate with best?

Nikiwe: My grandmother

Sandi: Your grandmother. Ok why?

Nikiwe: Like I'm so close with her

Positive relationship

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: Sometimes I speak to my mother but my mother

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe:

Sandi: Ok so you have a good relationship with your grandmother because she's always there

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok she makes you feel better if you go to her and talk about something she makes you ok

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: So do you have someone in your family that you regard as supportive towards your schoolwork, interests and social life?

Nikiwe: Social life like?

Sandi: No in anything that you do in school or in the community, who supports you?

Nikiwe: With schoolwork, it's my mother and uncle, jah

Sandi: Mmm and then

Nikiwe: My uncle helps me with maths sometimes but he doesn't stay at the house

Extended family support

Sandi: Jah

Nikiwe: And my mother is English

Extended family support

Sandi: Ok alright, ok good. Uhm how good is the relationship with your guardian? Your guardian is your grandmother because she is the one you are living with isn't it

Positive relationship

Nikiwe: It's strong

Sandi: You have a strong relationship with her. It's a good one neh

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok. How is your home environment contributing to your academic performance? Your home environment, how you know the situations in the home how are they contributing to your academic performance at school.

Nikiwe: Like bad things like at home or like how?

Sandi: Jah, like your home environment, how things are at home do they contribute negatively towards your school or do they contribute positively or what? Like maybe, they look in your room or what.

Nikiwe: I can say like my grandmother can take out her last money for me to get what I need for school. like I cannot say that it is a negative

Supportive family

Sandi: So can I translate it like this, your home environment is a supportive one because most of the time when you ask for stuff they give it to you

Nikiwe: I don't always ask them but most of the time jah I'm satisfied

Sandi: Oh ok, that's good ok. Uh but towards your academic performance, so when you get stuff that you need it makes you study better or what happens because I want to know how does the environment contribute to your academic performance.

Nikiwe: In my family schoolwork comes first my granny always ask me about school work

Family interest in her schoolwork

Sandi: Ok so, uhm your family especially your grandmother they uhm they sacrifice for anything related to school.

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok so you always get what you need for school

Nikiwe: Sometimes I don't get but most of the time jah

Sandi: Ok, uhm so what needs to change at home for you to enjoy success at school?

Nikiwe: My aunt must stop disrespecting my grandmother

Family risk(conflict)

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: Because she is always insulting, her and I don't feel good, like she's an old person but she doesn't deserve to be treated like that. They get along but they have their fights

Sandi: Mmm ok

Nikiwe: I could see my grandmother crying eish it makes me worry like why

Sandi: Mmm uhmm, tell me about things you do to help you cope, like with family issues like especially with the one you told me about just now uhm what makes you cope?

Nikiwe: Sometimes I cry alone or like talk to myself you know it's like I'm talking to someone but I'm talking alone I feel much better

Coping strategy

Sandi: Ok uhm , but you cry and then maybe you talk to yourself

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: What things do you do to help you cope with your school work?

Nikiwe: I always come here at the library to do my school work or go to Kamogelo for help if something is difficult.

Community support

Sandi: Jah then it makes you cope with the stuff. So what kind of things do you enjoy doing being with your family?

Nikiwe: When we are sitting like especially like maybe

Sandi: Ok so you enjoy things when maybe when your other parts of the family comes to visit and they talk about old

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Old days and stuff like that ok. Uhm so what kind of things do you not enjoy at home?

Nikiwe: Washing dishes

Sandi: OK

Nikiwe: Jah jah. When we're fighting like

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: I feel like sometimes I feel like I don't think there is a family that fights like this even when they don't agree on something

but sometimes I feel so lucky to have a family. Jah (mumbling)

Sandi: Ok when they are fighting they frustrate you and then, ok alright. So we are getting to almost the last part about your peers. This section is asking you about your peers, school and community support. So tell me about friends, how do you choose friends?

Nikiwe: When we have common things

Positive peer relationship

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: Like jah

Sandi: So

Nikiwe: When we have common things that's how I choose my friends

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: And their attitude like their social status so that I don't feel bad when they have things that I cannot have.

Sandi: Ok so you are checking the attitude and also checking their social status. Social status I mean like whether they are like rich or not and then you tend to club yourself with those that you think you are at the same level. Is that what you are saying?

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok alright. So do you have at least one or two friends who you like a lot and can count on when you need help or advice?

Nikiwe: Jah I have a friend

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: She is my best friend jah

Sandi: Ok, so it is just that one. Mmm what do you do with your friends during school, after school and during weekends?

Nikiwe: During weekends sometimes, we gather and play like, jah we just play and sit together

Sandi: Mmm and then at school?

Nikiwe: At school we practice maths most of the time because we are trying to improve our marks

Sandi: Ok and after school?

Nikiwe: After school we come to Mae Jameson center

Community support

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: To get, we borrow books so that we can improve our English and our reading

Sandi: Ok. So do your friends help you with your schoolwork or do you help your friends with their schoolwork?

Nikiwe: We help each other

Peer support

Sandi: You help each other neh

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok uhm, is there any school staff member or members that contribute or contributed to your academic success in school? Any teacher that you think maybe, you know teachers teach you it is their work to teach you and uh but do you think there's this one teacher or maybe teachers who helped you to be really successful with something maybe.

Nikiwe: You know I can say my teachers always motivate us to do better like we should listen to them and other teachers

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: But do you have a specific teacher that you think you know what uh this one is motivating me on maybe, is helpful he has helped me specifically with this thing and this is why I'm doing much better.

Nikiwe: I'm not sure but I think it's ma'am ????. She's my grade one, two and three teacher we always go to her when we have problems she helps us when we need something

Sandi: Ok ma'am ????. Ok I know her. Uhm so describe your relationship if any with a school staff member who is contributing or contributed to your academic success, what is your relationship with them? Do you have a good relationship; do you still have a relationship with her even now?

Nikiwe: Jah we do, because sometimes we go to her and visit her or when we need something, we go to her

Sandi: Ok

Nikiwe: And she is always open to us and she's welcoming

Sandi: Ok oh shame that's so sweet. So in your opinion what are some of the things teachers can do to help students to be more successful in school

Nikiwe: Provide extra classes, because sometimes we don't understand and when we go to them then they just don't have the time to help us

Sandi: Ok so you need extra classes

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok, are there any community members, friends or leaders or neighbors who contribute or contributed to your academic success, if so how?

Nikiwe: Jah its Kamogelo

Sandi: Ok

Positive teacher learner relationship

School risk(no extra academic support)

Positive relationship outside the family

Nikiwe: She always helps me with maths when I need help I go to her, she explains to me and she is like a teacher to me sometimes

Academic support

Sandi: Ok alright. So uhm are there any community organisational or institutions or services ,for example religious institutions, recreational facilities or youth organisations or child care services that help or help influence your academic success, if so how?

Nikiwe: I don't understand the question

Sandi: Do you have uhm any organisation that is contributing to your academic success.

Nikiwe: Here at Mae Jameson center there is a summer and winter program and at our church there is a choir practice you know, we learn more about music like choir

Community support(organisations)

Sandi: So your church, how is it contributing to your academic success?

Nikiwe: Sometimes, there are bursaries and we also do bible study

Sandi: So you still not yet qualifying to get a bursary, but if you study further you can get a bursary in your church, and uh how is this, you mentioned also Mae Jameson center how is it helping you?

Nikiwe: We do many actives

Sandi: Mmm

Nikiwe: Like uhm they teach us like subjects like maths, English things like that and teach ballet jah

Sandi: Ok, so it helps you to do well at school also neh

Nikiwe: Jah

Sandi: Ok , uhm can you name one person outside your family eg a teacher, a church member ,family friend who has had a very positive influence on you.

Nikiwe: I'm not sure

Sandi: Maybe your role model again uhm or the person you know, maybe a family friend who you look up to

Nikiwe: I can say it's Kamogelo , now at varsity jah

Sandi: Ok alright, so is there anything else you would like to add any question?

Nikiwe: I can say to children who are raised by their grandmothers should not take their grandmother for granted they should know that they are the best that they are lucky to be raised by their grandmothers because there are many children who don't even know their grandmothers. They are lucky I can say

Sandi: Do you feel lucky yourself?

Nikiwe: Very lucky

Sandi: Very lucky. Thank you for participating in this study thank you so much

Nikiwe: Thank you

