

So..., like boys used to judge me a lot. So, sometimes the boys, they used to bully me ... (A6, lines 45-53)

It seems that bullying has been experienced by participant A before. Other than bullying there are other discipline concerns that were experienced from previous schools. Participant D described how other learners used to sneak phones into her previous school, remarking:

Because most learners at my previous school, they never listened to our rules. Like some of the children, sneak the phones inside the school, in their bags. Even when the teachers knew, the child still took out their phones, do everything. (D11, lines 80-84)

Learners' responses seem to suggest that indiscipline was relatively acceptable as teachers did nothing about it. Participant E shared her experience that in her previous school there was no proper discipline system. This is what she shared:

I like the fact that in this school when you do your hair, they say do it in a certain colour, in my previous school you could do whatever... and I like the discipline system in this school but it is too strict... (E4, lines 5-8)

The observations from the participant's responses show that bullying was experienced, learners used to sneak phones into the school, some learners never listened to school rules and they could do as they wish even when the teacher was aware of it. Participant E was adamant that she liked the discipline system in the current Catholic school but that it was too strict. Gottfried and Kirksey (2018:24) clearly pointed out that Catholic schools have high levels of self-discipline and there is more discipline in the Catholic schools. In addition, the discipline that is expected of learners is reflected in the curriculum and in the discipline policies (Gottfried & Kirksey, 2018:24). It seems as though participants can differentiate the discipline systems between their previous and current schools. Also, participant's responses suggest that current Catholic school is stricter than in their previous schools.

However, the literature shows that examples of indicators of adaptation to a school environment include disciplinary behaviour, not adjusting, dropouts, self-esteem, and school-related stress (Booth & Gerard, 2014); Hastings, 2012; Brennan, 2012; Itzhaki et al., 2017; Baker et al., 2003; Bipath & Moyo (2016). Disciplinary behaviour is an indicator linked to adaptation challenges in the school system.

The CAS theory in Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2 explains that as actors such as learners interact with the school system adaptation challenges may emerge (Stewart & Patterson, 2016:2). Participant E appreciated the discipline system at the Catholic school but argued that it was too strict compared to the previous school and this could pose a negative experience to adaptation in the school. It appears as though the Catholic school system has a task of educating learners of different backgrounds in terms of discipline. Ballantine et al. (2017:18) have pointed out that the duty of the school is to instil moral values to the learners that manifest in the outward behaviours demonstrated in the school, home and community as discipline. The past experiences in the previous school on discipline became evident in the sub-theme on discipline. The fourth sub-theme on co-education or non-co-education is discussed in the following section.

- Girls' and boys' previous social relations in non-co-educational and co-educational schools

The school under study is a non-co-educational school, that is, it is a girls' single-sex school. The learners who joined the school came from either a co-educational or a non-co-educational school environment. As peers interact in the school environment, they build social relations. Many participants responded to how past experience in their previous schools influenced their experience to adaptation in the Catholic school environment through their social relations. It appears as if learners also brought with them previous social relationship experiences and compared these with the current social relations in the new Catholic environment. It was also noticed that most participants preferred schools with boys as they socially related well. Observations made from participants' responses clearly indicated

that social relations were unavoidable in social environments such as the school.

All the respondents attended co-educational schools as indicated in their responses. The following are the verbatim responses from the participants. Participant D described her past experience in a co-educational school. She alleged that boys and girls were distracted and concentrated on romantic affairs. She added the boys and girls would often have fights after school. This is what participant D narrated:

The change is like, in my previous school, most people were distracted, because they almost concentrate about having girlfriends and boyfriends'. (D6, lines 19-21)

... like even at our school, when we are going out going home, they stay at school, getting fights between both boys and girls and other ones... (D7, lines 48-50)

In addition, participant D also compared here previous and current school and explained that in the Catholic school she now got good marks, as learners were able to concentrate. Furthermore, she remarked:

... and in this school, we can concentrate more, because we are even getting there to 100 per cent like most people are passing in this school, because we concentrate. (D6, lines 16-18)

Similarly, participant H was previously in a co-educational school, however, she preferred to interact with girls only. She was adamant that moving to a new school with girls only did not change anything for her. These were participant H's comments:

... At my old school I did not really talk with any of the boys or interact with any of them, so it did not feel any different because I was only talking to girls all the time...(H3, lines 45-46)

Other perceptions on their social realities and background past experiences were remarked on by participants F and J. Participant F believed that girls

were not so loud but reserved when they related in a school with boys. This is what participant F said:

Yes, Ma'am, I feel like if this was a Co-ed school Ma'am, most girls would not be as loud and as ... I feel like that would be the boys. I feel like girls would be more reserved because you know, girls will be girls and guys would be guys. (F11, lines 56-57)

Furthermore, participant F still affirmed that interactions in all girls' school is different from interactions in a co-educational school. She further remarked:

Definitely Ma'am, because I feel like when you are in an all-girls school you kind of reserve yourself when it comes to interactions with the male species ... (F11, line 37-38)

Participant J felt that in a school with boys, girls would be reserved and mind what they did. It seems that their social relations would be different. This is what participant J commented:

Because sometimes if you are in an all-girl school, it is just, oh, I can sit this way. I do not have to worry about who is going to see you or whatever. But then if there are boys you will sit property like a lady. (J5, lines 57-61)

Differently, participant A said that she was used to an environment with boys. It seems that she was less comfortable with her social relations in the new school that had girls only compared to her previous school. This is participant A's remark:

Because I came from an environment where I was used to having boys around... (A3, line 38-41)

Similarly, participant C responded that she was used to a co-educational school and things were different for her in the new school as there were girls only. This is what participant C said:

The impact of only girls in this school. Ma'am, I am used to co-ed schools, so this is different for me... (C6, lines 44-46)

All the same, participant B elaborated that it was now different as they were girls only. In her view girls, judged each other. This is what participant B related:

What is different is that here in this school there is only girls, and girls judge each other by the way they look or how their body shape is or what they are wearing when we are wearing civvies and all that. (B4, line 79-80)

Observations made from the participant's responses are that in their previous schools they encountered social relations where there were fights between boys and girls. Besides fights there were also distractions to schoolwork as learners concentrated on having 'boyfriend and girlfriends'. On the other hand, observations from the other participant's responses revealed that more participants preferred being in a co-educational school. Participants A and C clearly stated that they preferred being among boys. Participants F, J and B pointed out that if boys were present in the Catholic school more girls would be reserved and not relate or behave the way they did.

It seems most participants prefer co-educational environments. The participants' background experiences indicate that they preferred and fitted into a school environment with boys. Specifically, participant C found it strange not to have boys in the school. This emerged as a surprise to me. Creswell and Creswell (2018:195) have pointed out that coding may fall into three groups, expected, surprising and codes of unusual interest. Furthermore, it was not anticipated, and no literature or common sense supported it. Participant A clearly declared that she preferred being around boys, and this may pose challenges in experiencing adaptation in the Catholic school environment where there are no boys. Interpretivist researchers recognise that individuals have varied backgrounds and experiences that construct reality in a wider social context (Ballantine et al., 2017:7). Martin, Fabes and Hanish (2014:152-153) posited that social interactions that occurred among peers, whether structured or unstructured, were strongly influenced by gender. Furthermore, boys- and girls-peer relationships at school have a strong outcome for the learners' social and academic functioning. In addition, the

CAS theory in Figure 2.2, Chapter 2, enables us to understand that in complex environments like schools, there are interactions among actors such as the interrelationships between and among peers (Stewart & Patterson, 2016:2).

Different schools of thought have presented discussions on co-educational and non-co-educational education. Single sex education has been placed on the table as a debatable issue that is complex and sensitive (Shah & Conchor, 2009:201). Further issues of debate are educational achievement and differences in cultural, social, economic, religious and other dimensions. Another study in Britain argues that single-sex school for girls are more academic whereas mixed schools are more social (Gill, 2004:108). Although the participant entered a single -sex school for girls, various reasons could have led to the choice of this type of school. However, background experiences about their previous schools may not be ignored as social relations among learners are inevitable. However, past experience in social relations among peers may pose a negative or positive influence on learners as they experience adaptation to a new school environment.

Theme (i) unpacked discussions on the participants' past experiences in their previous schools. Some participants compared their past experiences with the current experiences in the Catholic school environment. The sub-themes that emerged on participant's past experiences were based on religion, culture, discipline, girls' and boys' previous social relations in non-co-educational and co-educational school. These sub-themes were seen as influencing the experience of adaptation by participants in the Catholic school environment. It seems that participants had past experiences that posed challenges in the new school environment. Similarly, past experiences posed opportunities as learners were able to take up positive past experiences and apply them in the new school environment. In Theme (i), participants presented their past experiences in their previous school environment. In Theme (ii), the participants narrated the role played by peers in the experience of adaptation. Theme (ii) discussions are presented in the following section.

4.7.2 Theme (ii) The role played by peers in the experience of adaptation

Theme (ii) revolved around the participants' experiences and the role played by their peers. It is important to note that Themes (i) and (ii) are nested and participant's responses and discussions may be closely related. There was evidence of present social relations and interactions of the participants with their peers in the Catholic school environment. The participants' experiences were evident in the following five subthemes: perceptions of peers on sexuality, girls' present perceptions on interactions with boys, clique formation and fitting in by peers, and bullying among peers. Overall, there were many participants who responded to the sub-theme clique formation and fitting in. There were, however, few responses on the subthemes perceptions of peers on sexuality and Bullying among peers. All the sub-themes are discussed below. The first sub-theme to be discussed is perceptions of peers on sexuality.

- Perceptions of peers on sexuality

Sociologists view sexuality as the feelings, attractions and emotions that individuals hold (Little & McGivern, 2013:381). The responses on sexuality reflect the participants' experiences on the sexuality of their peers in the Catholic school environment. Very few participants responded by giving their experiences on sexuality. Being in a girls' school, this topic brought discomfort to the few participants as they were responding. In listening to the audio recording, the participants were uneasy as they responded on sexuality perceptions of their peers. Little and McGivern (2013:369) ha clarified that sexual orientation is the individual's emotional sexual attraction to a particular sex. Furthermore, Little and McGivern (2013:369) addresses four categories on sexual orientation, namely heterosexual, asexual, homosexual and bisexual. Recent studies have also uncovered pansexual as another category of sexual orientation that explains the sexual preferences of individuals (Spratt, Benoit & Hadcock, 2018:3), although this area still remains uncovered in terms of research. Pansexuality is explained as having a sexual attraction to individuals of all genders and/or sexes ((Spratt et al., 2018:1)

Participant C narrated that some girls explored their sexuality [as being homosexual]; they did not feel comfortable being with their peers even in changing rooms. This is what participant C said:

They hear stuff ...that being a lesbian is not good and ... Ma'am, other people, they do not feel comfortable around those people like they would not feel comfortable changing around them. They go to the other room because they feel like you are a girl liking another girl and you are going to look at them in a certain way. (C6, lines 61-63)

Furthermore, participant C observed that some of her peers had reflected that they were questioning their gender identity. This is what she added:

I feel like some girls in my grade, the Grades 8 and 9, like last year and this year, I feel like if they are changing their sexuality, I feel like it is just a phase because when we ask them if they going to marry a guy or a girl they always say a guy but then I am like, now you this or yes but I feel like its fine but some people do change or find themselves while they in an all-girls school. (C6, lines 44-47)

In line with participant C, participant J responded that she had seen some of her friends change their behaviour when they saw boys. These were her observations:

I think they can sort of change the way they behave with the friends because ... you see one of your friends goes, oh, you are always changing for him to be a lady ... (J6, lines 76-78)

The observations made from the participant's responses are that the other girls in the school were exploring their sexuality as homosexuals. The participants seemed to be surprised that those exploring their sexuality were uncomfortable to undress and change into their sports uniforms in front of the others in the changing rooms. The participants also added that girls who explored their sexuality as homosexuals at school acted differently 'like ladies' when they saw boys. This seemed to surprise and confuse the participants as to whether these girls who explored their sexuality preferred girls or boys. It

seems as if the girls who explore their sexuality in the school shy away from the rest of the girls in the school at particular instances.

Little and McGivern (2013:369) has indicated that homosexual women, also referred to as lesbians, are attracted to of individuals to their own sex. Little and McGivern (2013:370) has added that research has evidence that homosexuals are treated more unfairly than heterosexuals in schools. Secondary schools are rich contexts where children socialise. Furthermore, social interactions include adolescents' same-sex or other-sex sexual activities such as sexual attraction, sexual fantasies and behaviours that are influenced by the learner's sexual orientation (Li & Wong, 2018:1026).

It seems as though these girls were confronted with the dilemma of their sexuality as they interacted with peers of the same gender in the Catholic school. At the adolescent stage in single-sex schools, sexual relationships were explored such as intense affections and intimate friendships, as the school by its settings already segregates (Li & Wong, 2018:1026). Additionally, at the point of puberty, individuals respond differently to this stage, some are able to claim their sexual orientation, while others are unwilling to disclose that they are homosexuals (Little & McGivern, 2013:369). On the other hand, in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, homosexuality is regarded as an unnatural practice and 'Traditions have always declared that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered. They are contrary to the gift of life and under no circumstances can they be approved' (Hornbeck & Norko, 2014:145). In the Catholic Church homosexuality is forbidden and it seems that sexuality among the learners is secretly explored. This may bring discomfort to a learner's experience to adaptation as it is evident from the studies that homosexuality amongst peers is observed as they socialise. Besides the participants' responses on homosexuality as discussed in this sub-theme, the next sub-theme discusses the participant's responses on their preference for having boys in the school.

- Girls' present perceptions on interactions with boys

The second sub-theme in Theme (ii) presents the girl's present perceptions on interactions with boys. Participants echoed their different views on the fact that

in their current school there were only girls in high school and no boys. Participants' perceptions seemed to suggest that they preferred having boys in the school. Different reasons were given as to why the girls felt that the presence of boys in the school would change the girls' behaviour. Some participants echoed their views on interactions with boys in the school environment. The following are the various comments from participants.

Participant A was adamant that she preferred boys in her presence. The following is the verbatim response from participant A:

But then, I also prefer having or being around boys in my environment because ... girls, Ma'am, in general, they like drama and I do not prefer girls.... (A3, lines 58-62)

In addition, participant A narrated that in Grade 8 it was hard for her to adjust as there were no boys. This is what she said:

But then in general if a girl is around boys, they don't face any drama and gossip and all that. So, yes, it is really hard for me to adjust in Grade 8... (A4, line 75-76)

Similarly, participants F, B and J felt that in a co-educational school, girls would be more reserved. Their behaviour would be different. This is what participants F, B and J commented:

Yes, Ma'am, I feel like if this was a Co-ed school Ma'am, most girls would not be as loud and as ... I feel like that would be the boys. I feel like girls would be more reserved because you know, girls will be girls and guys would be guys. (F11, lines 56-57)

But then here in this school I feel that the reason why these girls keep on gossiping about each other is because there is no boys to rectify them. (B4, lines 79-80)

Because sometimes if you're in an all-girl school, it is just, oh, I can sit this way. I do not have to worry about who is going to see you or whatever. But then if there are boys you will sit property like a lady. (J5, lines 57-61)

Observations made from the participants' responses indicate that they preferred being around boys, hence they found it challenging to adjust to the new school because there were no boys. Participant J said that, they would 'behave properly like a lady' and in addition, participant F said that they would be 'more reserved' only if boys were present in the school. The participants seemed to believe that boys would make them behave differently. Participants B and G (B2, lines 23-25; G3, lines 76-79) expressed their feelings of discomfort with the current environment, echoing that it was only one gender and that it was difficult to get used to an environment with no boys.

More observations from the participant's responses revealed contracting views. Sharing the same views are participants A6 in lines 40-41 and D6 in lines 31-33. Participants A and D said that they preferred being in a school with girls only, where they could express themselves more and also have their own personalities. In view of this, Martin et al., (2014:174) expressed that in school contexts children actively construct their social worlds regarding their gender and other social interactions. Furthermore, strong same-sex interactions and feelings become central to their own gender and they feel more comfortable and knowledgeable about norms and culture of their group as girls (Martin et al., 2014:174).

It seems that more participants preferred having boys in the school and other participants were comfortable in the Catholic all-girls school environment. Martin et al., (2014:166) have argued that school environments that are naturally institutionalised to segregate boys and girls provide evidence of how gendered-peer socialisation is powerfully formed. In support, Kosciw, Greytak, Zongrone, Clark and Truong (2018:39) have put forward the idea that single-sex schools provide evidence of gender separation for learners. However, it is possible that the participants who preferred a single-sex school may experience less challenges in adapting to the Catholic school environment with girls only. Those that preferred having boys around them in the school may experience challenges and negatively adapt to the school environment with girls only. A different view has been put forward by other theorists such as Erikson (1959-1968) and Hall (1904) who addressed learners' adolescent years as a period of 'storm and stress' and, at that point, identity crises features

strongly (Simmons, 2017:3). Furthermore, Erikson's theory on classic conception, acknowledges that adolescence is that period when gender roles and identities increase and an individual's values of what they hold can change (Simmons, 2017:15). It can be argued that at the adolescent stage, as gender role identities change, some learners may identify with boys and other learners may identify with girls only. As discussed, participants could identify the gender they could associate with in the school environment. Participants also gave their views on clique formation among peers and their experiences in school adaptation. Clique formation is discussed as a sub-theme in the next section.

- Clique formation and fitting in with peers

Clique formation and fitting in with peers in the new school emerged as a sub-theme in Theme (ii). Cliques can be defined as 'exclusive and relatively tight groups of friends with whom adolescents spend most of their time' (Lodder, Schottle, Cillessen & Giletta, 2016:133). Participants' responses indicated that peers in the school played a role in the new school experiences as they adapted to the environment. It seems social relations amongst peers in the school environment are inevitable. It also seems as though the social relations give rise to clique formation and fitting in among peers. Many participants responded on how their groups of friends were formed, their importance and how they kept within. The participant's responses are discussed below.

Participant A narrated that she had a couple of friends, that she was comfortable around them. She added that her circle of friends was tight. This is what participant A remarked:

Ma'am, I have specific, like in my class, I have maybe a couple of girls, maybe they are like three or four out of the whole class, that make me...when I'm around them, I can be myself. I can just express myself. They will never judge me. They always understand my situation. They always understand me as a person, and they understand why I am that person. (A7, lines 93-84)

Even my circle of friends, it not very tight, because the more I let people in, the more they hurt me, and then the more I become that bad person that I do not want to be, ... (A8, lines 17-18)

Furthermore, participant A affirmed that having friends was a need in terms of safety. She added that:

... we need friends. We need interaction with people our own age, with our peers. So, how do you make sure that you are safe? (A20, lines 5-8)

Similarly, participant I pointed out that friends were important sometimes. This is what she said:

... yeah, friends can be important in some occasions, that is just, them, but they are there. (I10, lines 12-15)

It seems as though peers actually wanted to choose the groups that they fitted into. They felt that if they mixed with just anyone even in class groups then others did not cooperate or listen to each other. In line with this, participant B related:

...When we went to Bosco camp, we were grouped in two groups and I felt that it was not really necessary to group us into groups like that. Like, we could have just chosen our own groups. Because if the teachers group us, then we might be with people that do not want to cooperate or that do not want to listen to other people's ideas or opinions. (B2, line 3-5)

Participant F added more clarity to participant B's response. Participant F elaborated that not everyone was your friend in a school environment, she chose who to befriend. This is what she clarified:

Ma'am, I get along with the girls in this school Ma'am..., there are some girls I do not really interact with or I do not even want to interact with, because I kind of know what they are all about... (F21, line 76-78)

Participants C and D felt differently in that friends could find a solution to help you and you could learn from their good deeds. This is what they narrated respectively:

Yes, Ma'am. Because I think people cannot carry all their burdens on themselves like you have to tell someone or let it out to people so that they can find a solution to help you... (C10, lines 81-83)

I learn by my friends, seeing them doing the good things that are have been said to do, I am learning by them. (D13, line 53-56)

Observations from the participants' responses reveal that making friends, developing friendships and fitting in of the Grade 9 participants reflected their survival tactics, powerful connections with tight circles, their friendship and peer identity connections. Some participants indicated how friends influenced each other and shared opinions. The belief was that friends shared information, friends were more important, friends were your own chosen peers whose opinions mattered and that they were important and valuable.

It is evident that learners form cliques and support each other in the Catholic school environment. Learners' support for each other is varied and this is evident in the responses made by participants. Participant A19 in lines 84-87 said that now she is better in her academics as her marks had dropped previously but a friend had encouraged her and assisted her with schoolwork. In line with academics and supporting one another, Participant C remarked:

Me and my group of friends, now during exams and tests, we always help each other in the mornings, and we tell each other notes because if we ask questions and other person responds. We always leave that answer in our heads because we read it and not wrote it down. We always get like a picture of what we are going to write, and we remember the responses because someone else said it and it's not what we studied. (C9, lines 39-43)

The participants' responses pointed to the social actions of cliques and fitting in with peers. These concepts have demonstrated that learners may positively adapt and have good experiences with friends in the Catholic school

environment. The desire to feel belonging or trying to fit in in social interactions in the Catholic school, may create additional pressure (Eman, 2013:72) for the learners. During adolescence, there is a growing involvement in cliques which are important for adjustment (Lodder et al., 2016:133). In addition, in the adolescence stage, there is growth in the sense of belonging, social support and acceptance from peers and friendship is of more importance (Eman, 2013:72). Instead of receiving the most support and guidance from home, friends become the guiding angels and they rely on each other even in terms of coping in school contexts (Sumter, Bokhorst, Steinberg, & Westenberg, 2009:1010; LangenKamp, 2010:3; Eman, 2013:72). The participants related their experiences to adaptation and the role their peers played in adapting to their new school environment in relationship to cliques and fitting in.

According to Edson and McGee (2016:432), the CAS theory promotes that in a school system, a dynamic group of actors, such as learners, possess dynamic behaviours and complex relationships. Furthermore, the learners' motives and needs vary, some are supportive, and others may be in conflict and unsupportive (Edson & McGee, 2016:432) to adaptation leading to negative experiences such as bullying by peers in the school. In contrast, participants also shared their negative experiences on bullying amongst their peers. This is discussed in the next section as sub-theme 4.

- Bullying among peers

Bullying among peers in schools is ongoing and unacceptable behaviour that involves intimidating others by physically or verbally abusing them (Apostolides, 2017:3). In addition, cyberbullying has been identified as bullying that occurs through communication devices and channels such as instant messaging, text and online forums (Apostolides, 2017:3). The participants indicated that general bullying and cyberbullying was evident in the school. Bullying among peers emerged as a subtheme relating to the role played by peers in experiencing adaptation. Very few participants responded that bullying was being experienced in the school by other peers. It was worth discussing as it becomes evident that the participants did experience how other learners were bullied in the school. These experiences of others being

bullied seems to have constructed an understanding of bullying in the Catholic school.

Participant B witnessed other learners in the school being bullied. These were her comments:

I have not been bullied in this school, and, yes, I know someone or some people who have been bullied in this school. I will not mention names. (B7, lines 90-92).

Similarly, participant C specifically mentioned that a lot of cyberbullying was taking place in the school. This is what participant C remarked:

Ma'am, I have not seen bullying physically...Yes, but there is a lot of cyberbullying. (C9, line 53-56).

Observations from the participants' responses are that there is bullying in the school, and participant C specified that it is mostly cyberbullying that is experienced. Although very few participants responded, it is evident that bullying was taking place in the school. Research has indicated that generally bullying takes place in schools and as the learners progress through school, cyberbullying appears to peak in the eighth grade (Hinduja & Patchin, 2017:55). It seems that the participants' experiences of others being bullied plays a role in the way the participants have experienced adaptation in the Catholic school environment. In South African research conducted in 2014 in Catholic schools by the Youth Bureau of Market Research in Gauteng and the Western Cape on 'Emotions experienced from cyberbullying', the results showed that cyberbullying was on the increase; one in every five learners had experienced it (Apostolides, 2017:4). The study was conducted in Catholic schools and the participants were adolescents ranging in age from 13 to 18 years. Similarly, as reflected in the participants' profile in section 4.3 of this study, all participants were adolescents in the age range 14 to 15 years.

Hellström and Beckman (2020:90) have claimed that at the adolescent stage, peer relations are powerful and gender difference in bullying is evident. In addition, girls are less aggressive and assert their aggression obliquely. Similarly, Chukwuere and Chukwuere (2017:9944) supported that girls

cyberbullied more, and their tactics included gossip and rumours as a way of bullying. Furthermore, cyberbullying seems to be increasing in schools in South Africa and around the globe (Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017:9). In support, Catholic schools in South Africa have encountered challenges such as violence, bullying, alcohol abuse and sexual abuse (Baker, 2016:68). However, cyberbullying, on the other hand, contradicts the efforts of the Catholic school in trying to eradicate negative behaviours such as cyberbullying. Research has shown that there is a growing number of cyberbullying problems on the bullied and these include social, cultural, mental, academic and psychosocial implications (Chukwuere & Chukwuere, 2017:9949). The bullied learners encounter negative experiences in the Catholic school environment due to bullying and this complicates their adaptation process. The CAS theory makes it clear that, as actors such as learners interact in the Catholic school system, differences will emerge between the system and learners and also between or among peers themselves (See section 2.9.2, Figure 2.2, the CAS theory diagram). On the other hand, learners are from different backgrounds in terms of family and community and this brings about complex interactions which may result in negative experiences such as bullying in the Catholic school environment.

Theme (ii) exposed the role played by peers of these adolescents in their experiences to adaptation of the school environment. The participants' views emerged in the roles of first, perceptions of sexuality, secondly, girls' present perceptions on interactions with boys, thirdly, clique formation fitting in by peers, and fourthly, bullying among peers. The adolescents under study also gave their views on the schools' internal system and environmental dimensions which is discussed in Theme (iii) the following section.

4.7.3 Theme (iii) The schools' internal system and environmental dimensions

The third main theme that emerged was the schools' internal system and its dimensions. Three subthemes emerged: first, the code of conduct secondly the teacher–student relationship, and thirdly, the environmental dimensions of the school. It is evident that as learners go through their day-to-day operations,

activities and practices related to the schools' internal system, certain experiences are encountered. For example, one component of the internal system is the code of conduct which governs day-to-day operations of learners' conduct. These components exposed positive and negative experiences to adaptation as described by the participants in their responses.

The sub-theme that had the most responses from the participants was the teacher–student relationship. More participants gave their views on the teacher to student relationship which become evident that, in school adaptation, teacher relations is an important aspect. The first sub-theme to be discussed reports on the code of conduct and school rules as experienced by the participants. The sub-theme is discussed below.

- Perceptions of code of conduct and school rules

The participants' perceptions on the code of conduct and school rules emerged as a sub-theme in theme (iii). Most participants responded giving various opinions on the schools' code of conduct and the rules contained in it. It seems that there were more participants showing discomfort in the way the code of conduct was applied. The discomfort may be viewed as a negative experience in adapting to the code of conduct and its rules. However, in terms of positive experiences, few participants seemingly accepted the code of conduct as offering proper guidance in their behaviour and their appearance. Participant B7 had this to say:

My thoughts are that the code of conduct is a way of showing us the way we should behave and the way we should follow the code of conduct in the correct way. Like, for example, the hairstyles and the earrings. (B7, lines 74-78)

Furthermore, participant B revealed how comfortable she was with the code of conduct and the school rules in it. She had no problem in following it and added:

I actually follow the code of conduct by my own decision... (B12, lines 7-11)

Similar views on appreciation of the code of conduct were shared by participant J who felt that it was good, although some ‘things’ were not clear. Participant J said that:

Ma’am, it is a good code of conduct, but I feel like they do not really like to stick to it with some things. (J3, lines 69-71)

Though participant J did not specifically mention the things that she was not happy with in the code of conduct, participants F and E mentioned that they were happy with rules such as those for homework and class control to list a few. This is what the three participants shared:

And I think it really kind of motivates you do your homework, to listen in class, no to talking and just to do everything in a right way. (F3, lines 83-85)

As alluded to earlier, similar views were shared by participant E, who accepted the code of conduct as providing them with direction in terms of discipline. However, the participant was not happy with the demerit system in the code of conduct. The participant remarked:

I like this school’s code of conduct because it actually shows that we can show pride and honour. Honour our school in our appearance and the way we act, and I like the discipline system... I like the fact that when you do your hair, they say do it in a certain colour...Even though I do not like the demerits.(E4, lines 5-8)

According to participant E, not all the rules in the school code of conduct were likeable. Most participants shared the same sentiments to a variety of issues related to the rules and their views were that the school rules were sometimes unfair. Participant B had this to say:

I say it is unfair because, let us say, for example, you are not a person who usually forgets things the prefect does not understand why you do not have your name badge and they give you a demerit... (B6, lines 48-49)

Participant A explained that the demerit system quickly accumulated negative points that sent one for detention within a short period of time. It seems that, if the learner did not have their name badge then it was an easy way to accumulate negative points. The participants felt that was very unfair and unnecessary. Participant A remarked:

Like the name badge, Ma'am. I do not get why I should get minus ten. At least minus five to actually get you into that thing that you need to get your name badge in order. But minus ten, Ma'am, it can get you into detention a lot...(A11, lines 10-11)

Seemingly, participants D, G and H all commented that the rule that every learner must have their name badge was not necessary and too harsh. Participant G actually witnessed a fellow learner being punished twice for not having their name badge. This is what the three participants asserted:

But the most problem I have with the Code of Conduct, is about our name badges. It is because, maybe if we have lost our name badges, we cannot ... I think for me, we would not need name badges. (D12, lines 8-13)

Ma'am I don't know but like, there is someone I know, she got a demerit when she was at line-up, they asked where her name badge is and she said, she told another prefect but I think that prefect didn't believe her so she wrote her name again. (G10, lines 23-25)

I do not have my name badge and at every corner you get a demerit especially when you leave from line-up and the prefects are everywhere where is your name badge you do not have your name badge, go somewhere. (H8, lines 3-4)

As observed from the learners' responses, it can be revealed that the most common issue that brought discomfort to participants was the rule of the name badge. The rule was that learners had to wear their name badges showing their names and surnames for ease of learner identification. Other uncovered discomforts in line with the code of conduct were that the rules were too strict, unfair and discipline was very strict. The discomfort experienced by the

participants may lead to negative experiences to adaptation in the Catholic school system. These findings are supported by Borbélyová, (2017:209) who opined that in a new school environment, the acceptance of school rules portrays the level of adapting to the Catholic school environment. It can be pointed that those participants who do not accept and embrace the school rules may experience challenges in adapting to some specifications in the code of conduct. Similarly, those participants that accept the code of conduct and the rules will positively adjust to the school system, for example, participant E who said, 'I like this school's code of conduct'.

In Chapter 2, Figure 2.2, the CAS theory is used to clarify that the school system has embedded and nested sub-systems such as the internal system's code of conduct and its rules (Stewart & Patterson, 2016:2). A visual presentation on figure 2.2, in Chapter 2 shows that the school systems and actors interact in an enclosed environment of the school. The interactions offer a ground for connections or differences to emerge between the actors and the system. Differences may result in tensions building since the systems are nonlinear with respect to different dimensions and the learners are diverse themselves. Furthermore, the visual presentation shows that patterns emerge between the system and the learners and these can be traced as either negative or positive connections. Positive connections between the learners and the internal system result in positive experiences to adaptation being gained and vice versa. The internal system is also composed of teacher to student relationships that are discussed in the following section.

(2) Teacher–student relationship

The relationship between teachers and students featured as a sub-theme in Theme (iii). Two areas of discussion evolved around this sub-theme, first category (a) teacher's support, and second category (b) teacher's attitude. More participants responded on this sub-theme of the teacher–student relationship and how they experienced adaption with regard to teacher's support and attitudes. It seems as if there were overwhelming responses in terms of challenges of both the teachers' supporting roles and their attitudes towards the learners. Overall, less participants felt that teachers in the school

helped them construct positive experiences in terms of the teachers' support and attitudes. The first area to be discussed revolved around how the teachers supported the learners in the new school environment.

- Category (a) Teacher support

Teacher support is viewed as strategies and actions offered by the teacher in supporting learners in the school and, in turn, learners construct perceptions about the teacher's expressions of care, directing of behaviours, providing feedback and advice (Guess & McCane-Bowling, 2016:3). Participants' responses reflected that some teachers supported them with regard to various aspects in the school. More participants suggested that teachers offered them support in the school environment in different ways. Students seemed to value their relationships with teachers as implied by their responses. Participant D felt that when there were sad moments that one went through, such as failing schoolwork, the teacher would go to them and encourage them to do better. This is what participant D remarked:

The teachers are good, Ma'am, because most of teachers like students and when you are maybe sad or something, they will come to you and talk to you and make you be..., even when you have failed, they will just encourage you to improve... (D9, lines 11-13)

Participant D added that, she now felt comfortable talking to all the teachers. This is what she added:

The most important thing that I get used to is being able to talk to teachers. Right now, I can even talk to any teacher. (D13, lines 60-65)

In the same way, participant I acknowledged that some teachers checked on learners to make sure they were generally good. This seemed to be a general check-up that some teachers practiced, and learners felt supported emotionally. This is what participant I had to say:

I feel like, also teachers can be involved in the learner ask if they are okay, it is just practically some teacher do and just check up on the learner, to make sure they are okay. (I12, lines 75-77)

Similar views were echoed by participant J who explained how teachers sometimes offered emotional support to a learner who came into her class in tears. A sense of comfort seemed to be offered as the teacher supported the learner. This is what participant J explained:

Sometimes yes like for instance, in another subject there was someone crying and then the teacher just like called her aside and then they went and talked outside and then the rest of us were just, you know and this is time that could be used to learn something. (J12, lines 80-84)

As remarked by all the participants above, it can also be said that as learners enter the new environment, they observe and experience any type of support that is offered by the teachers. Teachers provide guidance on how things are done in the school and also show them around. Participant H indicated below:

... with the teachers, it was the guidance as well, yeah, guiding, showing like okay, this is how we do it and, showing me around. (H12, lines 37-39)

Although more participants revealed that they were supported by teachers in various ways, fewer participants' responses seem to suggest that teachers were unsupportive. The next discussion points out participants' responses that indicate that teachers were unsupportive. Participant F stated that:

I am also afraid to disagree with the teachers in this school because, Ma'am but, in this school I am afraid to do that because, I have seen what has happened to learners who have tried to do that. (F4, lines 19-20)

It seems that participant F was afraid of disagreeing with teachers. She had witnessed learners who had disagreed and had seen what had happened to them. It seems there was no support as participant F further remarked:

Yes, Ma'am but, I feel like as a teacher you also should be that support system for your learners. (F21, line 67-69)

It seems that disagreements between the teacher and learner resulted in the learner not being supported by the system, hence the teachers seemed to be

unsupportive. Another form of lack of support by teachers was discussed by participant A who reported that she did not relate to some of the teachers and even asked for advice as she felt that she was judged. Participant A had the following comment:

Well, Ma'am, there are specific teachers, Ma'am, that I cannot relate to. I do not think I will ever relate to them or I can go to them and ask them for advice, because I know deep down, they judge me as a person. (A8, line 30-32)

In line with participant A's views, participant J (lines 40-42) generalised that teachers must have an open mind to deal with many of the challenges that affected learners.

As observed from participant's responses, the findings are that learners expect a great deal from teachers, including relating, giving advice, and not judging which may seem as if being supportive to them. Some participants felt that teacher support was available in the school while some felt that some teachers were unsupportive, and all this revolves around the teacher–learner relationship. The learners could relate freely, to those teachers who supported them, talked to learners who were sad, encouraged those who failed to do better, and those who offered guidance and emotional support. The data seems to suggest that teachers play an important role in giving support to new learners and this becomes the learners' experience to adaptation in the new school environment.

As alluded to in Chapter 2, Buehler et al. (2015:55) presented that in a study carried out on environmental variables for the school, teacher support was one of the most important. This view is consistent with those of Langenkamp (2010:1) who remarked that transiting into secondary school involved complex negotiations with regard to teacher–learner relationships. Furthermore, relationships of teachers to learners in the school are most important for success in the school for learners as they adjust (Langenkamp, 2010:2). In this study, some participants indicated that teacher support offered challenges in the school and this resulted in tension building up. For example, participant A stated that she did not think she would ever relate to them or that she could

co and ask them for advice. (A8 line 30-32). This indicates tension building up in the teacher–learner relationship. Other observations made from learner’s responses on teacher–student relationship were glued to teacher’s attitudes. This is discussed in the next section.

- Category (b) Teacher's attitude

The teacher’s attitude emerged as the second category on the sub-theme teacher–student relationships. Das, Halder, Mishra and Debnath (2014:1) defined attitude as ‘an established way of thinking or feeling or behaving about something or someone.’ The learner’s responses indicated that teachers in the school exhibited certain feelings and actions that were attributed to their attitudes towards them. The teachers’ attitudes were found to be both positive and negative in different instances. Many participants responded that the teachers had reflected negative attitudes towards them. A participant had indicated that teacher’s attitudes were positive towards them as they experienced the new school environment. Participant D remarked the following on the teacher’s attitude:

The most teachers that have helped me to get used to the school is Ms Toddle and Ms Yoyo ... (D14, lines 85-88)

The thing that I did to be able to get along with people and be someone in the school is, the first time when I got here, my teacher told me to get along and... told one learner in my class to show me around. (D3, lines 29-32)

Participant D felt that some teachers in the school had positive attitudes, like Ms Toddle and Ms Yoyo (pseudonyms), as they assisted her to get used to the school by asking other learners to show her around the school. It seems the action of asking other learners to show her around reflected the teacher’s positive attitudes towards new learners, therefore a positive experience in school adaptation.

On the other hand, many participants’ responses reflected that the participants had experienced negative attitudes from the teachers in the new school environment. This was what Participant A said:

I look up to them, especially if they do good. If I see that, you are talking about another teacher with other learners, that's when I wouldn't look up to you, I wouldn't see the same person as I used to see, You can't be talking about other teachers with learners. That is just inappropriate.

(A16, lines 8-9)

Participant A seemed to be unhappy with the teachers' approach of discussing other teachers with fellow learners. She seemed to have disliked the actions and regarded this as inappropriate behaviour portrayed by the teacher. The teacher seems to display a negative attitude towards other teachers. Another negative attitude of teachers has been observed by participant F who said the following:

Ma'am most Grade 9s that I know, they are pretty reserved on choosing a specific subject because of their teacher. (F15, lines 70-73)

Subject choice amongst Grade 9s seems to have been influenced by the attitude of the teachers. The students were reserved about choosing a particular subject because of the teachers' negative attitude. In terms of subjects, participant F also felt that learners did not take Mathematics because they felt that the teacher had a problem. This feeling amongst learners could be a reflection on the teacher's negative attitude toward learners in the subject. This is what participant F added:

Yes, Ma'am, so I think that the problem is ... it starts with the teacher, because we are the learners Ma'am. There are some learners who just do not take interest in Maths. I think the problem is mostly with the teacher. (F15, lines 82-83)

Participant F really felt the problem was with the teacher, which seems to be a negative perception in terms of teacher attitude. Participants C and J had similar feelings about other teachers, and they responded by commenting:

Like if you get teacher X Ma'am, they say she is strict, so you have to keep quiet. Even if she comes to invigilate our class, she just says do not come to me just sit down and do your work.(C4, lines 79-80)

But sometimes say when they are angry and then you have a really good excuse a reason it is just they do not want to hear it and then, but then sometimes if they just in a good mood... (J8, lines 46-49)

Participants C and J seemed to have observed different moods displayed by the teachers as they related with them. For example, participant C had observed that teacher X ordered them not to come to her but should rather just sit and do their work. This may seem to be a negative attitude by the teacher towards the learners as also indicated by participant J below:

‘Ma’am, especially high school teachers, I feel like they should just try to understand and stop being, so I do not know, but in a way kind of rude to us. Ma’am, because I feel like you need to have a lot of patience as a teacher and you should also be pleasant ... (F20, lines 59-61)

The participant felt that the teachers were impatient, unapproachable and unpleasant to relate to. She also felt that teachers were not fair as they punished learners who tried to give their opinion in order to silence them. Participant F seemed to have a lot to say about teachers’ attitudes and this was her final observation:

A teacher might like give a learner a demerit for disrespect, but the learner was not being disrespectful; she was just voicing her opinion. It is a type of thing that I see a lot Ma’am. Children, learners, they cannot really voice their opinion because to most teachers it is like back chatting or being disrespectful. (F3, lines 97-99)

Various observations were made by the participants about teachers’ attitudes; these included being unfair, impatient, unapproachable, unpleasant, and having bad moods. Similarly, findings by Ulug, Ozden and Eryilmaz (2011:740) revealed that teachers’ negative attitudes included favouritism, not caring, being intolerant, not understanding, and being uninterested just to mention a few. These negative attitudes cause discomfort to the learners as they experience adaptation in the new school environment. This discomfort was experienced by participant G who even struggled to express her discomfort. She said:

Yes, ma'am. I have, yes ma'am, but like I felt scared of going to them cause I did not feel that comfortable. (G7, lines19-22)

On the other hand, those learners that experienced positive attitudes from the teachers may have experienced opportunities in adapting to the school environment. These findings are similar to those of the studies conducted by Engels, Colpin, Van Leeuwen, Bijttebier, Van Den Noortgate, Claes, Goossens and Verschueren (2016:1193,1195) who found that positive teacher–student relationships are characterised by warm, sensitive, and responsive interactions offered by the teachers. Furthermore, findings by Ulug et al., (2011:740) revealed that some of the teachers' positive attitudes include compassion, understanding, helpfulness, being friendly, tolerant, supportive and motivating learners.

Negative teacher–learner relationships were theoretically unpacked in Chapter 2 section 2.2, where Stewart and Patterson (2016:2) shared the CAS theory and clarified that actors (teachers and learners) unavoidably interact in the school system. As a result, conflicts may build as systems are diverse with respect to different dimensions among the actors. Conflicts between the actors (teacher–learner) result in challenges in experiencing new school adaptation, making teacher–learner relationships an important aspect in the findings. The findings on teacher–learner relationships and clarification by the CAS theory assisted me in constructing the (teacher–learner triangular relationship) following diagram on figure 4.4 that follows.

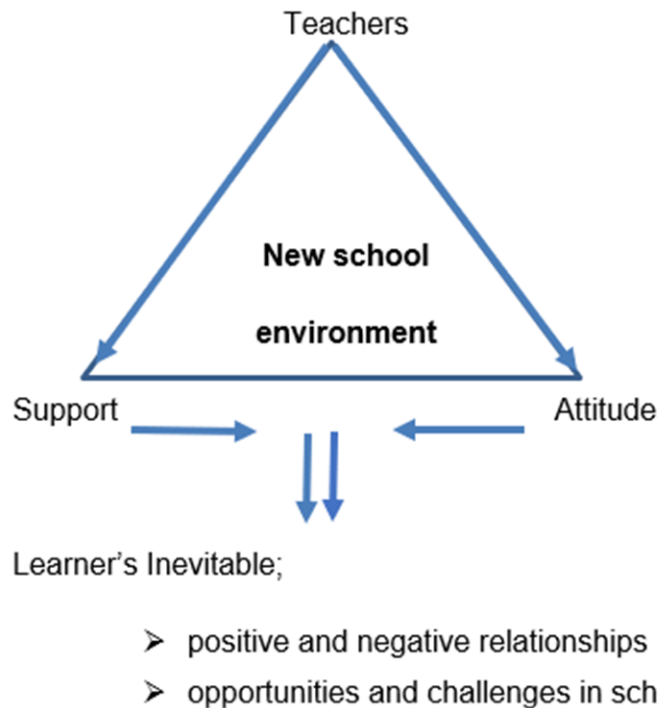


Figure 4.4: Teacher–learner triangular relationship: support and attitude [source own construction]

In conclusion the teacher–learner dimensions identified are support and attitude towards the learners. Both dimensions led to inevitable positive and negative relations which resulted in opportunities and challenges being experienced by learners. Other broader dimensions emerged, and these gave birth to the third sub-theme featuring on learners' experience in Catholic school environment.

(3) Environmental dimensions in the school

The third sub-theme featured is the school environmental dimensions. Participants' responses were identifiable with the following environmental dimensions of the school, religious education, identity, culture and practices. The various dimensions of the school were a testimony of the participants' experience in adaptation to the Catholic school environment. All participants responded in this sub-theme. There were more participants that discussed school identity and few participants responded on school culture dimensions.

- School culture

As alluded to in Chapter 2 section 2.3.4, school culture in the context of a Catholic school is the shared school life and expectations which refer to the traditions, norms, values, social interactions (Aldana, 2016:177). These contribute to the school experience of the participants as evident from their responses. Some participants responded that the school environment was friendly with caring individuals. Participant I felt that there was a sense of connectedness and care that was being shared in the school by fellow students. Participant I had this to say:

I feel like as much as ... Loreto, like the girls have their differences and they fight ... but we kind pull together especially when we go out on camps or mass and you sing or something like that. It is just some connection. I do not know how to explain it'. (I12, lines 82-84)

Similarly, participant G described how other learners who were not in her grade were very friendly and looked out for her when she joined the school and this is what she remarked:

Ma'am on the first day, ma'am I knew one like you said, but then other learners in Grade 10 came to me and they helped me with the books because I was carrying like two plastics of books and stationery. Like they helped me to get used to the surroundings, what is happening. Yes ma'am then I started having friends, ma'am, yes they also supported me, we supported each other and now things, I am used to like everyone .(G9, lines 71-76)

Participants A and E also felt that they had had good experiences in the Catholic school environment. They liked the environment and felt that there were good people in the school. This is what participants A and E indicated:

But then, being in a girls' school, especially this school, it is actually very nice. I actually like the environment in this school, but then Ma'am, I do

not like the fact that I do feel that I am in prison. When I come to here, when I here, because Ma'am... (A20, line 30-32)

There are very good people here..., helpful people. They are there when you need them and all we just need to do is just greet and we will put a smile on their face or just smile at them and say good morning. Ask them how was your day, and how has things been going. (E5, line 52-54)

In contrast, participant C felt that the school focused more on Christianity and participant E responded that the school had less focus on school outings, which are more of out of school social events. In agreement, participant C seemed to suggest that there were few cultural and sport events. These were their views:

About this school? Ma'am, can I say if they like had more events or more cultural... And also, sports things like athletics for high school because I feel like they are more for Christian and academic rather than sports. (C4, lines 89-97)

Ma'am I would like to ask why high school do not go on school excursions like outings every term because my previous school we went to a, like a trip once in a while, but every term we use to have like just a day off and would go to a certain place to... (E11, lines 61-63)

Observations made from the participants' responses reveal that most of them appreciated the school culture in terms of shared school life and being comfortable in the school. For example, participant I confirmed that they pulled together and there was some connection amongst those in the school. Participant G also revealed they helped her to get used to the surroundings which made her feel comfortable. Some participants shared a different view, saying that there were fewer social interactions because of less social events, such as school outings and sports. They felt that the school concentrated more on Catholic school activities and academics.

It seems as if some learners yearned for connections through social interactions such as school outings and sports despite the observations that they attended mass celebrations and other academic activities. Participant C confirmed and expressed that the school was inclined to religious concerns and school academics, implying that that was the type of shared school life that learners experienced as they also connected. In order to promote the shared school life, the school must focus on students experiences and views of school and also increase their involvement in projects and initiatives that enhance connections and social inclusion (Sammons, 2007:32). As participants in this research 'were adolescents, (Foster, Horwitz, Thomas, Opperman, Gipson, Burnside, Stone & King 2017:3) related that adolescents had their own views on connectedness to schools and they might risk inadequate school adjustment. Furthermore, school connectedness has been related to better academic outcomes and absence of it has been linked to negative outcomes. Quinn (2018:69) proposed that more research work should be done to explore if Catholic school environments that were deemed social environments offered multi-dimensional social context, especially for adolescents' developmental purposes (see literature in Chapter 2).

- School identity

School identity emerged as another environmental school dimension in the sub-theme, environmental dimensions in the Catholic school. Learners' responses constituted a variety of school aspects that distinguished the denominational school and its identity. Almost all participants gave their testimonies of their experiences to adaptation in the Catholic school environment with respect to the identity of the school. Some participants responded that they had had good experiences in relation to aspects of school identity. A number of participants also responded that they had discomfort and challenges in the Catholic school environment and its identity which is distinctive. The participant's responses will be discussed below.

The following responses revealed positive experiences to the school environment and its identity. Participant C responded that she had good experiences to share about a Catholic school. She further pointed out that the

aspect of mass and prayer were identifiable with the school. This is what participant C said:

Ma'am, like it is something I am used to and it is become a part of me. Like it is something I will be able to tell ...that I have always been to Catholic school and this is how they do things and yes it is a nice experience. (C13, lines 95-99)

Well, man for me it is like it's school in general just that they have certain things they do like go to Mass and pray a lot...So, my mom was like, she should take me to a Catholic school. (C4, lines 89- 91)

Similarly, participant F related that the school had been identified as being a religious school. Furthermore, she added the discipline in the school actually pushed her mother to enrol her in the school. Participant F echoed the following sentiments:

So, my mother was like, she should take me to a Catholic school because she knows that discipline there is, is the discipline. Yes, Ma'am, she really does not want me to lose my religion I guess while being in a non-Christian school. Ma'am, she just likes the discipline of the Catholic school. (F2, lines 48-50)

It seems the religious practices and discipline in the school were distinguished even by parents in the community. Participant E also indicated that she was comfortable with the discipline system in the school and the code of conduct which assisted them to honour the school. Participant E identified with the school code of conduct and was proud of the school. She remarked:

I like this school's code of conduct because it actually shows that we can show pride and honour and honour our school in our appearance and the way we act ,and I like the discipline system. (E4, lines 5-8)

Participant B seemed to be proud of the school as well. She appreciated being identified with the school. Her appearance, for example, hair colour, was prescribed by the school as she wanted to be the good student in the good school. This is what participant B commented:

... let us say for example I come to school with the wrong colour of hairstyle and the wrong earrings... It does not give other people outside the school when you are walking in the streets the impression..., that you are a good student who goes to a good school and all that, And that makes our school look bad... It is the student who is in that school that make the school look bad. (B7, lines 74-78)

Participants B, E, F and C's responses on school identity seemed to pinpoint various school aspects that they identified within the school. Also, in terms of school identity aspects of their responses suggested that they had positive school experiences.

However, this was different with other participants who responded that there were aspects that they did not understand or even get used to in the school. Participant A responded that she did not understand why there were specifications about which hair style, clothing and earrings learners should wear. This is participant A's verbatim response:

Okay, diamanté earrings, I understand that situation. They can take my earrings. I don't have to wear earrings. That is fine. But then Ma'am, with the hair part, I do not actually like the fact that ...the school does not allow us to have Mohawks and I honestly feel like girls should actually have that...You are not allowed to have that certain hairstyle. (A14, lines 8-9)

Furthermore, participant A felt that she was no longer herself because of hairstyle and earring restrictions by the school. Her response indicated that the hairstyle concern was a big issue for her as this changed her appearance. She added:

No, Ma'am. It makes me lose who I am, like...yes; it actually makes me lose who I am. Because I just want to be myself. I am not saying, when I'm saying I want to be myself, I do not mean change completely and actually breaks the rules like dying my hair, wear long earrings and all that. (A14, lines 8-9)

Participant A's response seems to suggest that the school is too strict for her liking as she could not have the hairstyle she liked. Similarly, participants J, B

and F all responded that the school was too strict, and this is what the participants had to say:

I think it is necessary, but the school does tend to just be like way too strict with it I, I feel like they tend to forget that we are young children and we kind of want our individuality. (J3, lines 85-86)

I think it is very strict. (B6, lines 41-44)

Ma'am, I feel like it is too strict Ma'am because, well at school... (F7, lines 14-15)

Furthermore, participant F felt that wearing the school blazer was too much for her. She suggested that wearing it on Fridays during assembly was fine. This is what she said:

...our blazers everyday Ma'am, I think blazers should only be compulsory on Fridays because that's when we have assembly and mass obviously. (F7, lines 18-20)

The responses from participants J, B and F seem to indicate that the school was too strict, and the participants did not identify with the school in this regard. Participant J elaborated that they wanted to retain their individuality as learners. Participant B regarded the school as being too boring, too enclosed and resembled a prison. This was participant B's comment:

I feel like this school might be boring in a way, and I also feel that like it's like a prison because of the gates and wall and all that.' (B8, lines 25-27)

The participants' responses seem to insinuate that they were indifferent to the school identity concerns. Generally, the observations made from the responses were that the school was too strict on some aspects like dress code and appearance. For example, wearing the blazer every day and not doing some hairstyles of their choice. This may lead to negative experiences to adaptation in the school environment. Participant F20 line 37-39 indicated that she felt like she would not manage to stay in the school until Grade 12 as the school was too strict, saying, 'Okay Ma'am, I feel like, Ma'am I do not want to stay in this until my Grade 12.' It seems that participant F does not identify with the school environment.

It seems like there is an identity clash for the participants who do not identify with the school aspects. The above findings are supported Wardekker and Miedema (2001:39) in Chapter 2 who say that schools try to assist learners to develop their own identity and they positively or negatively experience the school. At the adolescent stage, the learners are seeking to advance their individual identities as highlighted by Erikson's theories of life stages discovered in 1959 (Simmons, 2017:63) and this could present a conflict between school and learners' identities. If conflicting identities are equally dominant, the learner will experience stress, resulting in challenges that are related to development of positive self-identity and acceptance (Wedow, Schnabel, Wedow & Konieczny, 2017:293). Sharing other views are Convey (2010) and Dean (2010) in Zoeller and Malewitz (2019:67) who add that in a Catholic school environment the adolescents are at a stage when they seek for their own identities. It is noted from the CAS theory that differences between the school and the learners may emerge (see Chapter 2 section 2.9.2 as adapted from Stewart and Patterson (2016:2)). The differences in school identity and learner identity and/or the dominating of school identity over learner self-identity may complicate the experience of adaptation of learners as exposed in participants' responses. The next section reviews the participants' responses with regard to academics as a dimension of the Catholic school environment.

- School academics

School academics emerged as a dimension in the sub-theme, environmental dimensions in the Catholic school. The participants' responses indicated that school academics was an area of discussion in relationship to their experiences in adapting to the school. More participants responded in the category of academics in the school. They indicated that some aspects on school academics made them feel uncomfortable. A few participants indicated they were appreciative of the academics offered in the school and therefore seemingly comfortable. This is what the few participants narrated regarding the academics. Participant G remarked the following:

Ma'am it took me time cause at that previous school like they also used to speak like any language to us and then here we speak English, so and I also had to get used to the way they teach us. Yes ma'am, but now I am okay. (G11, lines 46-49)

Participant G responded that she had to get used to speaking English in the school and the way the teachers taught. She confirmed that was she is 'okay'. It seems that she was comfortable in the way she was being taught and speaking English. Participant H line 20-21 also acknowledged that the teaching methods were different. Similarly, participant, D, seemed to be comfortable in the way she learnt and extra lessons were offered by the school. This is what participant D had to say:

I think, in this school, I learn more than in my previous school, because we all get the extra lessons and everything, and we have more... (D5, lines 94-95)

Furthermore, participant D remarks that they do well academically because they are able to concentrate in the school. This is what participant D added:

The change is like, in ... this school we can concentrate more because we are even getting there to 100 per cent like most passing people in this school, because we concentrate. (D6, lines 19-21)

Participants G and D seemed to be comfortable with some aspects of the school academics. However, participant D also indicated specific challenges that caused discomfort in experiences in school academics. Participant D feared failing in two subjects which were Mathematics and Afrikaans. This is what she commented:

Like, in the most fear in my life, I do not want to fail in school. So, the problem that I am failing, it's because of Maths and Afrikaans. It's the first time in my life, like since I was born, I have not learned Afrikaans in my life. This was the first time. (D10, lines 43-46)

Similarly, participant A reflected that her academics had dropped in Grade 9 but she used to do very well. This is what she said:

I used to get like; I even have a trophy for Maths. Especially Maths, I was like one of the top achievers for Maths. I used to get trophies and all that academics and all that. Now, since I became that person, my academics just dropped, and it is really hard since I'm in Grade nine' (A18, lines 52-54)

Participant A felt that Grade 9 level was causing discomfort in her academics. Participant B echoed the same experiences by referring to this year (Grade 9), saying there was a lot of pressure:

Yes, and then comparing my last year and this year. I feel like last year was more like, it was fine, but this year, it is like there is a lot of pressure and all that. Like, in homework and everything like that, and assignments, and yeah.' (B2, lines 29-32)

Furthermore, participant B narrated that academically she felt that the school did not have boys as they would distract them (the girls). She added that they would concentrate more on the boys than on schoolwork. In addition, this is what she said:.

I feel like, they are scared that boys might distract us as girls, and we will concentrate more on the boys than our schoolwork. (B13, lines 47-51)

It can be concluded that as learners enter a new environment, they experience the academic aspects of the Catholic school. The findings point to aspects such as teaching styles, use of English language as a teaching medium, level of concentration on schoolwork, and too many homework and assignments, which seem to give participants a unique academic experience in the school. Some authors support the findings. Convey (2013:23) points out that Catholic schools maintain high academic standards which is a major contributor to their effectiveness. According to the literature referred to in Chapter 2, it is noted that improving academically is a positive indicator for a good experience in the new school (Correia & Marques-Pinto, 2016:248). Contrary to this, Booth and Gerard (2014:737) have pointed out that low academic achievement is related to adjusting to new school environment. Similarly, Rupsiene and Kucinskiene (2005:2) stated that the problems associated with adaptation are mostly on

account of a transition to a new school as a result of new environmental conditions and dimensions. In line with that, Hastings (2012:337) reports that generally when students transfer from primary school to secondary school challenges and opportunities become evident in trying to adapt. Similarly, Borbélyová (2017:207) asserts that when a child enrolls in a new school, the child must adapt by adopting the newly introduced social roles. Moreover, social roles result in positive adaptation which leads to the adolescent building confidence in academic and social roles (Eccles et al., 1993:93).

Therefore, school academics, identity and culture have been discussed above as in the schools' environmental dimensions sub-theme 3. All these dimensions have influenced the learners' experiences to adaptation positively or negatively as described in theme 3. According to the CAS theory discussed in Chapter 2, school environments are complex as systems are diverse and school dimensions vary. Furthermore, different actors such as teachers and learners interact, and this may cause tension in the school environment. Teachers' experiences with Grade 8 and 9 learners as they joined the school were relevant to the study to bring about an in-depth understanding of the learners' experiences to adaptation. The teachers' experiences are discussed below.

4.8 Teachers' responses to learners' experience on adaptation

Class teachers play an important role in the guiding and advising of their classes. To achieve this, the class teachers are allocated specific classes from all the grades. Among other responsibilities, the class teachers are also expected to offer support to learners by attempting to address their various challenges, guiding them and ensuring that they obey the school rules. Considering the class teacher's responsibilities and their closeness to the Grade 9 learners, it was deemed worthwhile to include the class teachers' views on how Grade 9 learners experience adaptation.

In this research, two class teachers (identified as Teacher X, and Teacher Y) were separately interviewed by the me and their responses were noted. The teachers responses were also transcribed, coded and analysed. In the same way that Grade 9 learners were treated, the teachers were also initially served

with letters of voluntary participation (See Appendix 2 for the teachers' letter). The only question posed to the two class teachers was, What has been your experience to Grade 9 learners' adaptation to the Catholic school environment as they join the school in Grade 8 and progress to Grade 9?. The individual interview procedure followed was briefly described in Chapter 3, Section 3.7.2, Step 4.

The class teachers were given the freedom to narrate what they had experienced as well as what the Grade 9 learners' experiences to adaptation in the Catholic school environment were. Overall, the teachers' narrations revealed that there were more challenges than opportunities faced by learners as they experienced adaptation to the new school environment. Different views on the experiences of the Grade 9 learners were given by the two class teachers and are discussed next.

First, both Teachers X and Y pointed out that the main complaint put forward by the learners was that the school's rules in the code of conduct were too strict. Secondly, the learners pointed out that they did not understand why they did RE as a subject and participated in Catholic church activities and practices, as they were only at the school to learn. In line with this, Teacher X revealed that when the learners are in Grade 8, they frequently complained that it was difficult to adjust and follow the Catholic prayers. In addition, Teacher X indicated that Grade 9 learners did not want to participate in activities such as the bible quiz and school outreach programmes, as they felt that these were being forced to them. On the other hand, Teacher Y pointed out that the learners were happy to do reflection on Friday, as they felt that this activity accommodated everyone spiritually.⁴⁰ Lastly, both teachers reported that the challenges that the learners experienced in adapting in Grade 8 and 9 were mainly due to poor parent-to-school relationship. In particular, Teacher X highlighted that some parents were non-Catholics and thus had no idea of the Catholic School system and therefore could not assist their children in adapting to the new experiences. In the same way, Teacher Y's view was that

⁴⁰ See field notes in Appendix 10 on all Catholic activities and practices in the Catholic School.

both the parents and their children needed to be supported when it came to skills required to for their children to adjust to the challenges in the new school environment.

Of importance to the study is the fact that both teachers felt that learners were not adequately assisted in adjusting to the Catholic school environment. Teacher X and Teacher Y remarked that the behaviour of the girls was very difficult at Grade 9 level to both subject teachers and to them as class teachers. However, Teacher Y attributed this to the adolescent stage and its influence on the Grade 9 learners. In this regard, literature in Chapter 2 sub-Section 2.6.3, suggested that the onset of the adolescence stage posed many challenges and could possibly be playing a big role in influencing their experiences in the new school environment.

In summary, both teachers revealed that there were more challenges in experiencing the school environment and its system in both Grade 8 and 9. Furthermore, according to the two teachers, the Grade 9 learners experienced more hurdles ranging from bad behaviour, drug abuse, social media abuse, clique fights and other challenges that contributed to their experiences in the Catholic school environment. That said, Teacher Y was adamant that each learner had their own way of adapting to a new school environment at both Grade 8 and 9 levels. It seems that the school environment that the learners encounter provides a rich experience for the learners. A better understanding was provided by the field notes in Appendix 10. A deeper understanding of the field notes contribution to the study and the findings is briefly described below.

4.9 A brief discussion on field notes and understanding learners' experiences

The field notes in Appendix 10 were pre-planned to give evidence of Loreto Convent Catholic school's contextual information, in terms of its systems, culture, identity and day to day school-life activities that were encountered by learners. The contextual descriptions highlighted in field notes gave meaning and aided in understanding the experiences of adaptation by Grade 9 learners in the school environment. For example, the school's religious practices and events such as mass, Ash Wednesday and other activities as described in the

field notes required that all learners take part. Learners were expected to show reverence and respect to these events in the Catholic Cathedral church at all times and also take part in them. Grade 9 learners therefore encountered different experiences to adaptation in these specific exposures. As revealed in the findings in theme (i) section 4.7.1.1 on learners' past experiences, it seems learners also experienced culture shock, as they experienced religious practices that they were unfamiliar with from their past religious experiences.

4.10 Conclusion

Three major themes were generated, (i) Learners' past experiences, (ii) The role played by peers in the experience of adaptation and (iii) The school's internal system and dimensions. The interpretations and findings of the participants indicated that the Catholic school environment posed both positive and negative experiences to adaptation. The Catholic school, like any other school, is a complex entity with high levels of interactions, interdependence and interconnectedness within the linear and non-linear dynamic structures (Hawkins & James, 2018:732; Stewart & Patterson, 2016:2; Wang, Han & Yang, 2015:382). As learners experienced the school environment, they were exposed to the complexities of the school. According to the CAS theory, the complexities are evident as differences, similarities and connections due to actors such as learners interrelating and interacting in the school system and as a result patterns emerge (see Chapter 2 Figure 2.2, the CAS theory) Furthermore, these patterns give rise to the 'butterfly effect' which depicts the symbolic visual interpretation of the non-linear interactions as underpinned by the CAS theory. As an analysis, the learners exist in the Catholic school environment with various complexities which are inevitable as they experience adaptation. This analysis leads to the chapter summary of Chapter 3.

4.10 Chapter summary

This chapter described the data presentation, analysis and interpretation. I engaged Tesch's eight steps as applied by Creswell and Creswell (2018) in the coding process to generate a description of the collected data and detailed interpretation. The coding methods used in this research are attribute, in vivo, narrative, values and descriptive. These codes were utilised in the coding

process using Tesch's coding process. Data was analysed and presented as themes. Three themes were generated, as discussed above, using mostly in vivo coding as the dominant coding strategy. The ontological and epistemological understandings for the coding choices for specific strategies and methods were explained. Literature was used as a control in the theme discussions. The next chapter, Chapter 5, will examine recommendations to the findings and conclusions to the study.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 focused on the interpretation, analysis and findings of the data collected from Grade 9 learners' in-depth individual interviews. This chapter now focuses on discussing and outlining the research findings, recommendations, limitations and a summary of the study. The purpose and focus of the case study approach used in this study was an attempt to understand how the Grade 9 learners experienced adaptation in a Catholic school environment. The specific period of focus was from the time the learners were newly introduced into the school at Grade 8 level. In this regard, the Grade 9 learners were chosen as the main participants in the interviews conducted for this research. The research question was comprised of two parts: the main question and its sub-questions. The main research question attempted to establish how Grade 9 learners experienced adaptation in a denominational school environment. In addition, the sub-questions assisted in providing a more detailed understanding as to how the Grade 9 class teachers viewed and experienced the adaptation of their learners to the Catholic school environment.⁴¹ Part of the Grade 9 class teachers' duty is to give advice and assist their learners to cope with the new school environment upon their arrival at the school while in Grade 8. Another sub-question sought to understand how the Catholic school environmental elements such as identity and culture, religious aspects and school policies, influenced the learners' experiences to adaptation as they attempted to adjust to their new school environment.

To address these questions and its sub-questions, a qualitative case study was conducted, guided by the interpretivist paradigm. Ten Grade 9 learners were selected, as explained in Chapter 3, to be participants and they were individually interviewed, and audio recordings obtained. The objective of the in-depth interviews with the learners was to establish their experiences to adjusting to the school environment. In addition, the literature review in

⁴¹ See Chapter 4 section 4. for a detailed discussion on the responses given by the Grade 9 teachers.

Chapter 2 explored a number of aspects in the findings. The CAS theory in Chapter 2 played the role of providing a lens to the study and gain an insight into the complexities inherent in the Catholic school environment. Furthermore, the CAS theory assisted in reflecting and providing an understanding of the participants' experiences in the school through the findings.

Finally, data collected in the form of audio recordings from the interviews was transcribed, coded using Tesch's eight steps of the coding process, interpreted and analysed. The coding process enabled a logical flow of information in this research. As a result, three broad themes inductively emerged giving a direction to this chapter. To ensure this chapter remains in sync with the research questions, both the background and context of this research were revisited and aligned. The chapter also attempts to ensure that the background issues previously raised are contextualised in relation to findings obtained as proposed by Okeke and van Wyk (2015:574).

5.2 Revisiting the background and undertaking made

The literature in Chapter 2 pointed out that schools are complex environments that may be difficult to understand. This implies that the different types of school environments that are in existence are complex. For instance, a government school environment offers its own experiences as it possess a particular set of complexities, while an independent Catholic school possess different experiences. The complexities can be explained by the interactions, relationships, connectedness of the systems and individuals found in the school set-up. The issues regarding denominational school environments, highlighted in Section 1.2, are of central importance to one's need to understand how Grade 9 learners experienced adaptation in that given environment (Okeke & van Wyk, 2015:574). Consequently, the issues underpinning this research are first that, historically, Catholic schools are of a foreign origin and are mostly composed of Eurocentric religious beliefs (Chryssides & Greaves, 2014:53). On the other hand, indigenous people of South Africa are grounded in the origins of the African religion.

Secondly, the issue of diversity in Catholic schools is evident in the culture and religious affiliation of the learners in these schools (Naidoo, 2015:117). Again, outlined in section 1.2, Baker (2016:60) indicated that about 24 per cent of learners belong to the Catholic denomination in Catholic schools in South Africa as recorded on the CIE database for 2014. Not surprisingly, diversity amongst the learners is expected as about per cent are non-Catholics and possess other diverse cultures and various other religious affiliations.

The third issue concerns the identity of a denominational school, which includes ownership names of the school, the admission criteria and the curriculum (Faas, Smith & Danmody, 2018:4) as mentioned in Chapter 2 section 2.3.2. Denominational schools possess unique environments that have a particular identity. As the Catholic school is attempting to preserve its identity, the adolescents in that system are also seeking to establish their own identity within the same environment (Kroger, 2015:65).⁴²

The fourth issue dwells on the past experiences of the Grade 9 learners before moving to a denominational school environment. As presented by Wahyuni (2012:71), interpretivist researchers recognise that individuals carry with them experiences from their past, gained from a variety of backgrounds and these warrant a construction of some reality.

The fifth issue pertains to why parents, in some instances, choose to enrol their children in Catholic schools. Parents may enrol their children in Catholic schools without any prior knowledge of the systems of these schools and the values the children are expected to follow. The decision by parents to enrol their children in a Catholic school may be swayed by past academic results, the geographical proximity of the school, the school rules, the perceived discipline within the school, and other subjective factors. In fact, parents should be at the forefront of assisting their children to adjust to the new school environment as the family members are considered to play a critical role in

⁴² See Chapter 2 literature on school identity.

influencing their children to adapt more easily to the school environment (Baker et al., 2003:215).

The several issues mentioned in Section 1.3 and in this section, help in bringing forth the purpose of the research as articulated in subsection 1.4.2. Despite all these issues that have just been pointed out by various empirical researchers (see Baker et al., 2003; Wayhuni, 2012; Chryssides & Greeves, 2014; Naidoo, 2015; Kroger, 2015; Baker, 2016; Faas, Smith & Danmody, 2018), little attention has been paid to analysing how Grade 9 learners experience adaptation to a Catholic school in a South African context. The participants' realities and experiences to adaptation in the school environment are revealed as the main findings of this study. The findings are evaluated using the themes produced and discussed in Chapter 4.

5.3 Main findings of the study

5.3.1 General trend in findings

Participants' responses regarding their experiences to adaptation in the Catholic school environment enhanced the findings. The findings revealed both negative and positive experiences by learners in the school. As analysed from the findings, it seems there were more negative than positive experiences in adjusting to the school. The findings brought a clearer understanding of what some learners go through as their experiences when they adjust in a Catholic school environment.

5.3.2 Outline of findings

Two key findings were made in relation to adjusting to religious practices in the Catholic school environment. First, the findings indicate that participants feel overwhelmed by the religious practices that are new, unfamiliar and encountered frequently. Secondly, the findings reflect that adjusting to religious practices in a Catholic school is a process with stages and, at times, the learners try to follow the religious proceedings, but they have challenges. These findings indicate that there are challenges in adapting and therefore negative experiences encountered by learners to the religious practices in the Catholic school as some of the learners are not originally of Catholic

denomination. As described in the detailed field notes and school setting, the school Church often invites all learners in the school to attend Church services and other Catholic practices.

Further findings point to the learners' experiences of the Catholic school culture, which presented a culture shock the first time they were exposed to it. The literature shows that in a school setting, learners go through distress psychologically and emotionally if they do not first embrace the school's culture. In addition, the CAS theory indicates that learners are the actors in the school system that interact and, as a result, differences may emerge as they experience the school culture and other fellow learners' cultures.

Other findings related to the school culture in terms of religious experiences are that the school is more inclined to mass celebrations and religious concerns and less involved in other social interactions such as sports and school outings. Learners want more social interactions and different experiences besides religious experiences. As indicated in the learner's responses, some learners yearn for connections with the school through social interactions as they experience their shared school life. The literature in Chapter 2 reveals that in order to promote the learners' shared school life, the school must focus on learners' experiences and increase their involvement in projects and initiatives that enhance connections and social inclusion (Sammons, 2007:32). It is also realised that Grade 8 and 9 levels are early adolescent stages and adolescents have their own views on shared school life and connectedness, which influences their experiences as explained in the CAS theory in Chapter 2 on school relationships and connectedness within the internal system of the school.

Another key finding reflects on the school's discipline system. Very few respondents reported that the discipline system of the school was lenient. As evident from the information presented by the baseline questionnaire on the participant's profile, many parents had influenced the learner's decision to join

the school for reasons such as the discipline system of the Catholic school.⁴³ Findings also indicate that the Catholic school was stricter than their previous schools. As reflected by the participants, they could differentiate their past experiences in terms of discipline between the previous schools and in their current school. Other findings in this research uncovered discomfort among learners in line with the code of conduct that the rules were generally too strict and unfair, for instance, hair styles, wearing of blazers all the time and name badge. This pointed to areas of learners' dress code and individual appearance issues. These issues were raised as concerns by most participants, indicating that the school was being rated as very strict in relation to discipline and the code of conduct.

However, findings from the literature in Chapter 2 reveal that as learners adapt to a new school environment, the acceptance of school rules portrays the level of adaption to the school. The CAS theory in Chapter 2 also reveals that as learners relate within the school system, differences emerge between the learners and the Catholic system and these differences can result in conflicts. In addition, the literature revealed that at the adolescent stage, the learners are seeking to understand their individual identities as adolescents, and this could present a conflict between schools' and learners' identity. If any one of the identities dominates, be it school identity or learner self-identity, then there are complications leading to negative experiences to adaptation in the new Catholic school environment. On the other hand, if there is a balance between the learners' identity and school identity then learners positively experience the school environment and embrace the code of conduct and the expected school rules.

Further findings relating to the participant's academic experience in the school are also revealed. The participants reported that aspects such as teaching styles, use of the English language as a teaching medium, level of concentration on schoolwork, and too many homework and assignment tasks

⁴³ See the 10 participants' demographics details as presented in section 4.3 participants' profile in Table 4.1.

seemed to give them a unique academic experience at the school. The findings reveal that the participants were overwhelmed by the school academic standards. Literature in Chapter 2 supports the findings that Catholic schools maintain high academic standards which is a major contributor to their effectiveness. However, it also reveals that concerns have been raised about low academic achievement and its relation to learners' adjusting to new school environment.

Another key finding was that most participants preferred co-educational school environments. The findings reveal that not all learners who move into the school environment adjust positively as it is a non-co-educational Catholic school. The participants' background experiences indicate that in their previous schools they were used to having boys in the school. Furthermore, with reference to the current school environment, they pointed out that it was strange that there were no boys and their school experiences were complicated without them. These findings emerged as a surprise and were not anticipated as no literature or common sense could explain why they would adapt positively to the school with boys being around. This stands with the fact that in their families, communities and interactions outside the school, there are boys. However, literature in Chapter 2 attempted to explain and link these findings to social interactions that were strongly driven by gender, whether in school or outside the school. It could only be linked to social interactions whereby the participants preferred the opposite sex. Then a question maybe posed, What are the experiences to adaptation of girls in a non-co-educational Catholic school environment in the absence of boys?

In contrast, more findings revealed that few participants preferred to be in a non-co-educational Catholic school environment. It was evident that they were more comfortable and their experiences in the school brought more opportunities in that they could relate well as girls, share same views and personalities. The literature in Chapter 2 supports the idea that girls relate well among themselves and they have strong same-sex interactions, they feel more comfortable, knowledgeable about norms and culture of their group as girls. In addition, the literature in Chapter 2 backs the idea/theory/notion that adolescence is that period when gender roles and identities flourish and at the

same time identity crises are also at their highest point. The participants who prefer a girl-only environment identify with same-sex gender roles.

The findings also show that in the girls-only environment, peer relations lead to clique formation amongst the learners. The participants pointed out that it was necessary to form small groups of friends in close circles that had members who supported each other in adjusting to the school. In addition, the findings reflect that the learners in their small groups assisted each other with bettering their academic marks, studying together and sharing of social issues. The learners saw this as a strategy or tactic to survive by forming cliques that helped with fitting in with their peers and also in the school environment. Accordingly, in forming cliques, these learners who are adolescents encounter various experiences to adaptation. The literature in Chapter 2 indicates that during the adolescent stage peers seek a sense of belonging and they want to fit in amongst friends and in school contexts. According to the CAS theory in Chapter 2, stakeholders, such as learners, form complex relationships among themselves, with the motive of supporting each other or sometimes causing conflicts. It is safe to say that some peers in the Catholic school helped each other in various ways to adapt positively to the Catholic school environment which has been identified in Chapter 2 as having a unique setting.

On the other hand, the findings revealed that peers also caused conflict among their peers through cyberbullying. A few of the Grade 9 participants indicated that cyberbullying was mostly being experienced and identified as a negative experience among their peers in the school. Research has indicated that Catholic school cyberbullying is evident as learner's progress to the eighth Grade and that one in every five learners experiences cyberbullying in the adolescent stage. Cyberbullying contradicts positive school experiences as perpetrators are also in the school and exist amongst themselves. Other studies suggest that girls use cyberbullying as a tactic to bring each other down; they gossip and spread rumours about each other as already explained in Chapter 2 literature review.

Another major finding was that in the Catholic school environment the learners are exploring their sexuality. According to some of the respondents, some of

the girls are sexually attracted to the other girls, but they are afraid to come out in the open. They secretly explore their sexuality as they are fairly aware that in a Catholic school, homosexuality as a practice is unacceptable for learners. The literature in Chapter 2 suggests that the girls are confronted with a dilemma that at the adolescent stage individuals respond differently to sexuality issues and they explore sexual relations even in a girls-only school as reflected in this study. However, the Catholic school traditions classify homosexuality as an unnatural practice and it is therefore frowned upon. According to the CAS theory, the Catholic school system is a complex environment, as it allows for differences to emerge between the school system and the learners as they interact. The Catholic school system views homosexuality as unacceptable, but at the same time the girls in the school practice it. This complicates the adaptation process as the girls have to secretly explore their sexuality.

The other two key findings were with regard to teacher support and teacher attitude to learners in the Catholic school environment. The two findings revolve around the teacher–student relationships in the school. The findings revealed that teacher support influenced the participants' experiences both negatively and positively. According to some participants, the teachers were unsupportive in terms of giving advice and guidance. A few participants indicated that the teachers did not relate well to them; the teachers judged them and offered no guidance. The findings indicated that some learners had negative experiences with their teachers, and this complicated the adaptation process for learners. On the other hand, more participants revealed that some teachers offered support by talking to them when they are sad, when they failed, and when they needed guidance and emotional support. The findings suggested that teachers play an important role in giving support to learners and this is the learners' positive experiences to adaptation as they relate with the teachers in the new school environment. It is evident that not all teachers offer support to learners in the Catholic school. However, the literature in Chapter 2 directs that the teacher's support is crucial to learners as they move to a new school environment. Furthermore, the CAS theory asserts that in complex environments such as schools, the environments offer challenges

and opportunities to learners as they relate with teachers and hence complex negotiations are required.

Closely related to the findings on teacher support are findings on the teachers' attitudes towards learners. Learners recounted on both positive and negative experiences due to teachers' attitudes in the Catholic school. The findings reveal that very few participants had good experiences arising from positive attitudes from their teachers. By contrast, most participants had bad experiences due to the teachers' negative attitudes. As indicated in the findings on negative attitudes presented by teachers, participants reflected that teachers tended to be unfair, impatient, unapproachable, unpleasant, and displayed bad moods to them. In contrast, findings from some participants were that teachers displayed positive attitudes to towards learners. Participants' responses were that some teachers assisted them to get used to the surroundings, thereby experiencing a positive attitude from the teacher which made it easier to adjust to the school.

The literature review in Chapter 2 confirmed that teacher–student positive relationships increase the learners' chances of good behaviour, better social interactions and academic excellence. The CAS theory also clarifies that student–teacher relationships are inevitable on a daily basis and that conflicts and challenges may emerge as new patterns of relationships in the complex school Catholic environment. The conflicts and challenges with teachers result in negative experiences by learners as they try to adjust.

In summary, the findings showed that participants' experiences were both negative and positive when adapting to the school environment. It was demonstrated in the findings that learners do not only academically learn, they also learn socially through a shared school life. New school environments pose challenges and opportunities to learners as it is inevitable for learners to interrelate and connect with the Catholic school system. In the system, stakeholders such as the teachers, fellow learners and the priest are part of the Catholic school administration and all coexist at Loreto Convent School. Environments such as schools are socially important to learners as they socially construct their experiences and thereby shape their lives. The findings

reveal that learners in a Catholic school environment experience adaptation to the new school environment and that it is a process from the time they enter the school in Grade 8 level and continues well beyond.

5.4 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of and approaches used in the current study, the following suggestions for possible future research are put forward:

- As the current study analysed only Grade 9 learners at Loreto Convent School, it would be useful to consider how all Grade 9 learners, regardless of when they enrolled at the school, experienced adaptation to the Catholic school environment. Similarly, the same research questions empirically tested in this study can be used and the results can be compared. A similar approach may also be used to include all the learners at Loreto Convent School.
- Another area for future research pertains to exploring other important aspects inherent in a school environment other than adaptation as an experience. This would widen the scope of issues to discuss learner's experiences with respect to those other factors such as sexuality as according to the findings.
- The study could be conducted using a quantitative approach. The results to be obtained could be interesting, especially if compared to the results obtained in this study which used the case study method, which is a qualitative approach.
- The study could also be extended to include Grade 9 learners in other Catholic schools (Pretoria and all South African provinces).
- The results obtained if all the teachers at Loreto Convent School were included in the interviews could have been interesting to note – this presents an area for further research.
- It is further suggested that a study be conducted exploring experiences to adaptation by focusing on both public and government schools in their respective contexts, to possibly compare their results.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The study has a number of limitations:

- The research focused on exploring how only the Grade 9 learners experienced adaptation to the Catholic school environment; no other grades were involved in the interview process. Thus, the majority of the learners and other grades (Grades 8, 10, 11 and 12) within the school who did not satisfy this criterion were not included in the study. Eventually, 10 Grade 9 learners, whose interview results were analysed, formed the final sample. Nevertheless, this does not make the results obtained in this study less significant.
- The input from only two Grade 9 teachers was taken into account, as the criterion for participating in the study required only that the participants' class teachers be interviewed in attempting to explore the teachers' views to how Grade 9 learners experienced adaptation to the Catholic school environment.
- The study was limited to Grade 9 learners at Loreto Convent School, which contributed to a limited sample size being considered. Hence, the results cannot be generalised universally but apply only to the subjects in the study.⁴⁴
- The research was restricted to exploring how Grade 9 learners experienced adaptation to a Catholic school environment. Thus, adaptation was the only process considered and explored in establishing how Grade 9 learners experienced it.
- The interviews were restricted to Grade 9 learners who enrolled at Loreto Convent School from Grade 8 level. All other Grade 9 learners and learners from other grades were not considered in the study.
- The number of Grade 9 learners sampled was only limited to 10, based on the voluntary criterion previously explained, thereby reducing the sample size for the study.

⁴⁴ See Chapter 1 section 1.16

- The learners' exploration of sexual relations and sexual identities emerged as an area of concern, however this study did not focus on this concern as it was not within the scope of this study. It may be of exploration in another study on exploring sexual relations and sexual identities in a single sex school.

5.6 Summary of the study

The study aimed at understanding how Grade 9 learners experienced adaptation in the Catholic school environment. The study indicated that the participants experienced both negative and positive new school experiences. Chapter 1 outlined the research questions and the motivation for doing this study which was born out of the research problem. Included in Chapter 1 was the history, background and context of Loreto Convent School. Chapter 2 explored and extensively discussed selected relevant literature on adaptation and Catholic schools. The CAS theory was discussed as the most suitable theoretical lens attempting to magnify and understand the complexities in social environments such as the Catholic school. Chapter 3 outlined the research design and methodology of the study. A case study method guided by the qualitative approach was deemed the most suitable in understanding Grade 9 learners' experiences of the new school environment. The interpretivist paradigm underpinned the study. Data was collected from learners through individual in-depth interviews. A field note diary and researcher's observations were used to enrich the case study therefore ensuring a high level of credibility and trustworthiness. Ethical considerations ensured valid, reliable and rigorous findings. Chapter 4 presented the findings from the participants' interviews. By utilising Tesch's coding process, three broad themes emerged from the data collected from interviews. The three themes directed the discussions in Chapter 5 were findings, recommendations, limitations and a chapter summary was presented.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter of consent from school principal

To Whom It May Concern,

I Suzette Truter..... (full name) being the Principal of Loreto Convent School as of 26 March 2019, hereby grant Mrs Memory Muganiwa the full permission to have full access to the school's resources for the purpose of conducting her academic research. Mrs Memory Muganiwa has been teaching in Grades 8 to 12 at Loreto Convent School from January 2009 and is now pursuing a master's degree in Humanities in the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria's Groenkloof Campus. This letter of permission gives Mrs Memory Muganiwa (student no. 12263509) access to material, participants and buildings that she deems important for the fulfilment of her research objectives. Mrs Muganiwa has made a full undertaking that all the school resources and material accessed while conducting her research would only be used for academic purposes and that all information collected remains fully confidential.

By way of this letter, I hereby authorise Mrs Memory Muganiwa to conduct her research at Loreto Convent School.

Yours,

Mrs Suzette Truter

School Principal: Loreto Convent School

Signed:.....

Witness:

Date:

Appendix 2: Letter of invitation to Grade 9 class teacher



24 June 2019

Dear colleague (Grade 9 class teacher)

Ref: Letter of invitation to participate in my research

My name is Memory Muganiwa. I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria and am enrolled in the Education Humanities. As part of my academic journey, I am required to conduct research and I am doing a study on "Adaptation to a denominational school environment: a case study of Grade 9 learners at a Catholic School". I would like to invite you to participate in my study so that I can understand how you as a Grade 9 class teacher experience Grade 9 learners' adaptation to the Catholic school environment. This will assist us in our teaching profession as class teachers are also concerned with how our learners adjust to the school as they become part of the Loreto family.

I am going to explain to you how you will be involved if you decide to participate. If you have volunteered to participate, you will be asked to attend an in-depth individual interview session with me as your interviewer. The interview will take place in the boardroom for privacy and will take about 60 minutes. You will be asked to discuss your experience of how Grade 9 learners experience the school environment as they join the Catholic school from other schools in Grade 8 and progress to Grade 9. In your view, what are the key aspects of the adaptation of Grade 9 learners at the school? I will probe further if I need any clarity as I lead the interview discussion. The interview sessions are private and confidential. Your valuable input will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Your voice will be recorded during the interview session and I will sign a confidentiality clause.

Yours sincerely

Memory Muganiwa

University of Pretoria student

.....

As a requirement of the ethics department of the University of Pretoria you are required to sign a letter of consent, acknowledging your willingness to participate and that you may withdraw at any time. I also declare that no video recordings will be used; only audio recordings to capture your voice for the research report. Your participation will be treated with confidentiality.

Appendix 3: Letter of request to social worker



24 June 2019

Dear research assistant (school social worker)

I am conducting the following study: **“Adaptation to a denominational school environment: a case study of Grade 9 learners at a Catholic school”**. I would like to invite you to participate in my study by assisting with the selection process, sampling process and in-depth individual interviews with learners as I am conflicted in that I teach all Grade 9 learners. I am conducting this study so that I can understand how Grade 9 learners have experienced being at a Catholic school since they started Grade 8.

I will address the Grade 9 learners about the research and the selection process with the permission of the principal or in the presence of the principal. After addressing the learners, I will hand over the selection process to you. This ensures that I do not know which learners are participating. It is done through completing the Volunteer to Participate form, which is placed in a box so as to ensure confidentiality. You will receive the forms and will identify eligible participants. I do not need to know who the participants are.

You will have to check if the six participants were not involved with you in previous sessions. The consent letter to the learners informs them that they are participating anonymously and that the information is confidential. You have to sign a letter with a confidentiality clause stating that you will only interview participants who you have not encountered in your social work sessions. You will interview learners who you have not encountered before, which means there is no previous link between the interviewer and the interviewee.

The eligible learners will move to stage two. In stage two, six participants are selected in the sampling process. As the researcher and teacher, I am not in a position to carry out the sampling process and in-depth interviews with the participants due to issues of confidentiality and influence on participants. You will receive guidance on how to conduct the activities.

The six participants will complete a baseline questionnaire before their interviews. Privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance and participants must not know who is being interviewed. Please remind the participants that only audio recording will take place. The baseline questionnaire is for background and context to study the information. The questionnaire will also make the participants feel at ease. They will only complete a questionnaire in the interview room. The learners may not write their names on this questionnaire and will use the assigned letters A, B, C, D, E and F as their “names”. There are only five specific questions to be answered.

Appendix 4: Letter requesting participation to Grade 9 learners



24 June 2019

Dear learner

Ref: Letter of invitation to participate in my research

My name is Memory Muganiwa. I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria. I am enrolled in the Education Humanities. As part of my academic journey I am required to do research. I am busy with the following study: "Adaptation to a denominational school environment: a case study of Grade 9 learners at a Catholic School". I would like to invite you to take part in my study. I am doing this study so that I can find out how Grade 9 learners have experienced being at a Catholic school since they started Grade 8. This will assist you, other learners and future learners that join our school to adjust and be part of the Loreto family.

I am going to explain to you how you will be involved if you decide to participate. If you have volunteered to participate and you are selected, you will be required to do two activities. The school social worker will carry out the activities with you on my behalf. First, you will fill in a baseline questionnaire. The baseline questionnaire is for background and context information. You as a participant may not write your name on this questionnaire. You will only use the assigned letters A, B, C, D, E and F as your "name". There are only four simple and specific questions to be answered.

The second activity after filling in the questionnaire will involve an in-depth individual interview with you as participant. The school social worker will ask about your experience in Catholic school in grades 8 and 9. She will ask you to elaborate if there is a need for clarity. The interview session will take about 45 minutes and will be conducted in the social worker's office.

I will sign a confidentiality clause to ensure that your participation is private. Your contribution to this research is very valuable. The school social worker may also not discuss your views with anyone. Your names will not be revealed, and your contributions will be written in such a way that no other person will know who you are – not even the researcher.

The recordings (on cassettes) and your questionnaires will be kept in a safe and private place. Remember that participation in the research is voluntary. After the research report, I will share interesting news with you about what we understand in terms of adjusting to our school.

Appendix 5: Letter requesting consent from parents of Grade 9 learners



24 June 2019

Dear parent/guardian

I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria. I am enrolled in the Education Humanities. As part of my academic journey, I am required to carry out research. I am inviting your child to be a participant in my educational research. The title of my research is: "Adaptation to a denominational school environment: a case study of Grade 9 learners at a Catholic School".

The aim of this study is for the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of how Grade 8 and 9 learners adjust to the school environment. It is important to conduct this research as adapting to the school environment influences teaching and learning.

Your child may volunteer to participate in the study and may also withdraw at any time. However, if they decide to participate in the research study, your permission is required. You may also explain to your child what this study entails. Not participating in this research will not affect your child's school record or relationship with the school.

During the interviews, the participants' voices will be recorded and the information will then be transcribed and used for the research. All recorded material is confidential and your children will not use their actual names in the research. The material is used strictly for academic purposes, is kept safe and confidential and is destroyed after the University's assessment. No names will be presented in the final research report.

The school social worker has volunteered to facilitate the activities and I trust her professionalism. As I am a Grade 9 teacher, I interact with the children every day and they might feel inhibited to discuss their experience at school in my presence.

If your child is selected to participate and they are willing, they will take part in two activities. The school social worker will conduct the activities with your child on my behalf. First, your child will complete a baseline questionnaire. The baseline questionnaire is for background and context information. Your child may not write their name on the questionnaire and will only use the assigned letters A, B, C, D, E and F as their "name". There are only four simple and specific questions to be answered.

The second activity, after completing the questionnaire, will involve an in-depth individual interview with your child. The school social worker will ask questions about your child's experience at the Catholic school in grades 8 and 9. She will ask you to elaborate if there is a

Appendix 6: Volunteer to Participate form for all Grade 9 learners

Form to find out if you want to take part in the research

I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria. I am enrolled in the Faculty of Education. As part of my academic journey, I am required to carry out research. I am doing a study on **Adaptation to a denominational school environment: a case study of Grade 9 learners in a Catholic School**. I am doing this study so that I can find out how you Grade 9 learners have experienced being at a Catholic School since you started Grade 8. This will assist you, other learners and future learners who join our school in adjusting and being part of the Loreto family.

I would like you to fill in the volunteer to participate form. Filling in this form does not mean you are already taking part in the study. Filling in this form is part of the selection process should you indicate that you want to participate. Through the permission of the principal, I am letting the school social worker take over the process of selection as I do not want to know the participants for confidentiality reasons. After filling in the forms I will ask you to put the forms in a box and the school social worker will check who is willing to take part. If you decide to take part in the research, there are two activities to be carried out that the school social worker will discuss with the selected individuals. Let us read the Volunteer to Participate Form together.

Instructions: There are only four simple questions. Fill in the spaces with the necessary information and also place an (X) in the appropriate box.

Name:

Surname:

Grade:

1). Please indicate whether you are Catholic or not.

Catholic (Yes)	
Catholic (No)	

2). Please indicate the year you enrolled at this high school for Grade 8 from other schools.

In the year 2018	
Another year	

3) Please indicate whether you willing to be selected to take part in the research.

Yes, I want to be selected	
No, I do not want to be selected	

Thank you for filling in the selection form.

Appendix 7: Baseline questionnaire

DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME

I, as your facilitator, will treat your answers with confidentiality. I will not include your name or any other information that will identify you. I will destroy the notes and audio tapes after we complete the study and publish the results. Feel free to treat this as an activity. The first activity you will fill in the baseline questionnaire. The second activity you will discuss what your experience at this school has been since Grade 8 to now.

Introductions (no names, identify learners as A, B, C, D, E and F. They should state their letter.

Instructions: Answer all questions. Fill in the spaces.

Provide the letter that has been given to you.

Place an **X** below the correct letter.

A	B	C	D	E	F

1.1 How old are you?

1.2 Please provide the year in which you enrolled at Loreto Convent School. _____

1.3 Whose idea was it for you to be at this school?

1.4 Did you know anything about a Catholic school before you attended this school? ANSWER yes OR no. _____

1.5 If your answer is yes to 1.4, mention any three things.

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

Appendix 8: Activity 2. The Facilitator will lead the discussion

The facilitator will remind the participants that their voices will be recorded. She will ask them to further explain if she needs more clarity.

In-depth interview question for Grade 9 participant.

What has been your experience in a Catholic School? That is, what have you experienced at this school since the beginning of last year in Grade 8 up to present?

Appendix 9: In-depth interview question for Grade 9 class teachers

What has been your experience to Grade 9 learner's adaptation to the Catholic school environment as they join the school in Grade 8 and progress to Grade 9?

Appendix 10: Field notes

Loreto Convent School, January 2018 – December 2019

Introduction

My name is Memory Muganiwa. In fulfilment of the requirements of the Master of Education (Humanities), I ventured into this two-year journey of studies. I have been teaching at Loreto Convent Catholic School since January 2009. Field notes may contain personal information about the researcher (Phillipi & Lauderdale 2018:386). I am a high school science educator teaching Grades 8 to 12. The experience of teaching in the same school for many years left me wondering about how the new learners adapt to the Catholic school environment. I sought to understand the learners' experiences as they entered the new school environment and moved from Grade 8 to Grade 9. I was more interested in participants that did not necessarily attend the Catholic Church or a previous Catholic school. As part of my research, I recorded important school events, practices and activities in my diary as field notes. I recorded only what was deemed important for the study field notes, paying special attention to the areas of focus and purpose of the notes.

Areas of focus

Areas of focus for the field notes included observed events, practices and activities. I recorded unstructured observations as notes (Cohen et al., 2018:387) in the researcher's school diary. These notes were hand-written. I listened, watched and attempted to gain a full understanding of the real-life events (Yin, 2016:170) taking place in the school as new Grade 8 learners joined the school activities. Observations made included relations within the school's special events (such as mass), practices in the school and other activities of interest to the research. Most importantly, I attempted to incline more towards those events that focused on the research questions. The research question served as a strategy in guiding the recording of field notes (Yin, 2016:167). I did not find it necessary to record daily, but only when I made observations of interest to the study.

The school diary was useful as a source of note-taking in that it contains school events and activities with their dates and time (Yin 2016:170) which assisted in organisation of the field notes. As previously pointed out, it is imperative to gain an understanding of the purpose of the field notes and this is now discussed in the next section.

Purpose of the field notes

This case study research uses a qualitative approach, and the use of field notes enables it to become robust (Phillipi & Lauderdale, 2018:387). Furthermore, field notes give a better understanding of the school context by providing thick and rich descriptions which are well-documented for the study. These descriptions are recorded in the events, activities and relations within the school that serve as valuable data to be used at a later stage in the research.

The school activities, practices and events

Loreto Convent School has approximately 700 learners and 54 educators. The school is only comprised of girls from Grades 3 to 12. It offers pre-school, primary and secondary education phases. The primary phase acts as a feeder to the high school. The baseline questionnaire assisted by screening those learners who came through from the school-feeder programme, Catholic-denominated learners, and those who previously attended other Catholic schools. However, at Grade 8 level, the school admits both Catholic and non-Catholic learners. The participants considered were those who joined Grade 8 from other schools.

The school is located in Pretoria Central Business District (CBD). As a Catholic school the school is adjacent to the Roman Cathedral Church of Pretoria. Being part of the community, the school uses the church to carry out its religious events and practices from time to time. A typical day for a learner starts with line-up in the morning (around 7:30am) and during the second break (around 11:55am) there is Bible reading, a prayer (for example the Hail Mary prayer) and religious quote of the day, to mention but a few practices. It is also compulsory to end the school day with a prayer. If for some reason, the

educator overlooks having this closing prayer, the Representative Class Leader (RCL) reminds the educator for the prayer to be done. Friday sees the occurrence of reflection (around 12:45pm) and assembly (around 12:55pm). Reflection is done by a designated class teacher who guides the learners in prayer, Bible reading and sharing of religious teachings and songs with the whole school at that point in time through the public address (PA) system. During assembly, the learners hosting the event provide the first and second Bible readings, under the guidance of their class teacher. The class leading assembly also provides a religious teaching in the form of an act, song or poem. It is common tradition for the school priest to attend the school assembly in order to preside over mass for that day. For example, the priest may attend assembly on opening day and any other unfortunate event such as death in the school.

Religious observations and activities

Attending mass in the cathedral is compulsory for all learners and educators and this requirement is part of the Code of Conduct. The priest and religious teachers in the school lead and guide the mass. Learners are required to participate in the mass by reading the Bible, performing altar service duties and any other necessary duties. The learners are mandated to follow all proceedings as required such as kneeling, reciting prayers, genuflecting and other practices. These proceedings are observed during the school events.

Church events also celebrated by the school

In order to follow the events, I diarised the events as quickly as possible during or after the observations (Cohen et al., 2018:387). It was not possible to be fully present at all events, for example during confessions. The events occurred in the Church Cathedral. The events are presented according to what occurred in the school terms in the table below.

Table showing Church events celebrated by the school

Term 1 Events	Dates	Brief explanation of activities
Mary Ward week	23-30 Jan	All learners take part in the Mary Ward activities. Catholic ethos are incorporated exploring Mary Ward values such as Hope, Justice, love, Sincerity and Freedom. The activities are marked and marks are allocated for the subject RE
Inauguration mass	25 Jan at 11:00am	Marking the beginning of the year for school learners. Welcoming the new learners in the school.
Confessions with Priest	15 Feb 9:30-11:00am	Learners volunteer to go for confession. A common practice in the Catholic church.
Ash Wednesday mass	6 March at 7:45am	This is a long mass service that is led by the priest. The normal mass proceedings are followed as described above in religious observations and activities. What is unique is the placing of ashes on each and every learner's forehead in the form of a cross marking 'Ash Wednesday' as beginning of lent.
Stations of the cross	20 March at 7:45 am	All learners participate. A ceremony that involves kneeling, praying and turning to each and every artistic image that symbolises the passion of Jesus and how he was crucified on the cross.

Term 2		
Confession with Priest	10 May 9:30-11am	Learners volunteer to go for confession. A common practice in the Catholic church.
Ascension day of our Lord Para liturgy mass	30 May 7:45 am	Mass is celebrated by all learners and teachers to mark the ascent of Jesus into heaven. Normal mass proceedings are followed.
School birthday mass	7 June 7:45am	The school celebrated 141 years of its existence in [give the year]. All learners attended mass and followed the normal mass proceedings. The whole school received sweets and celebrations out poured into the classes and corridors.
Term 3		
Assumption of Mary mass	15 August 7:45am	All learners attend mass to mark the occasion when Mary Mother of Jesus was taken into heaven.
Spring mass	6Sept 7:45am	Mass celebrate and mark the beginning of spring season. All learners attend and take part.
Valedictory mass	16 Oct 7:45 am	This mass is attended by all learners, teachers and parents. It marks the new journey that is about to be embarked on by the matric learners when they finish Grade 12. A farewell after being empowered by the school in various ways.
All souls mass	1 Nov 7:45 am	This mass commemorates all the people who have passed away and are known by any school members. The learners are

		asked to write the names of family members or friends who passed away during the year. Mass on those who have departed was conveyed.
Term 4		
Gift mass	26 Nov 7:45 am	Gifts are brought into the mass and blessed by the priest. These gifts are collected and wrapped by learners for outreach: places such as children's homes, old age homes and other disadvantaged places of the society receive these gifts.

It is compulsory for all learners and educators to observe and celebrate the church events which are guided by the school rules. The school's religious events also require that all learners take part in them and thus learners are expected to show reverence and respect to these events in the Catholic Cathedral at all times. For instance, learners should wear a school blazer and be presentable overall while in the church. It is a punishable offence to go against any of those rules and religious observances. At one time, I witnessed a Grade 9 learner being punished by being issued with a demerit form for being found sleeping in the Cathedral during Ash Wednesday mass without a valid reason. The Grade 9 learner, however, complained that the mass service was taking too long. In other instances, other learners have been heavily taken to task for talking in the Church during service. It is a place of worship and it seems no intolerable behaviour is acceptable during that time.

Some undesirable behavioural instances observed

A number of ill behaviours were observed which were not in line with what was in the school code of conduct and other Catholic norms. For instance, learners were found cheating during exams and class tests in a particular subject - which is against the school rules and academic practices. Such offences are only dealt with by the school management. The learners were subsequently

found guilty and suspended after going through a disciplinary procedure. On a number of occasions, demerit forms were issued by prefects for offences such as improper hairstyle, violation of the school dress code, a failure to wear a name badge, and other offences deemed punishable. On the other hand, learners have been punished by teachers for failing to do homework, classwork, class projects, and also for eating, unproductive talking, and sleeping in class, to mention but a few. Not surprisingly, I have observed over time that there are more Grade 8 and 9 learners in detention on Fridays from 2pm to 4pm. It would appear, there are more learners from Grades 8 and 9 in detention compared to the other Grades.

Social activities contributing to social relations in the school

Social relations in the school are evident at certain important events in the school. These events include Heritage Day, celebrated annually by the entire nation. Thus, on 20 September 2019, the learners were permitted to wear clothing symbolising their cultural identity as their 'civvies day'. On the same day, learners engaged in different traditional activities and songs to celebrate the day. This plays a pivotal role in accepting and tolerating the cultural diversity present at the school.

Sports also appear to contribute to social relations, apart from maintaining a healthy lifestyle. The sports that are predominant at the school are netball, tennis, hockey and swimming. In particular, the swimming gala was held on 21 February 2019 during which different school house teams competed. The learners seemed overjoyed as evidenced by teasing opposing house learners and dancing to trendy music in a jovial manner.

A number of school clubs exist that are led by teachers. These school clubs include environmental science, green team, yoga, outreach, liturgical and school choir, to mention but a few. The schools clubs events are held within the school environment with no external engagement with learners from other schools. One can observe that this enhances internal social relations. This seems to have created dissatisfaction among some learners who strongly feel that they would like to engage with both boys and girls from other schools through the school clubs.

Academic activities

Historically, the school has placed itself amongst the top academic performers in the city. This is evidenced by the remarkable results covered by the print media on 15 January 2018 in an article titled 'City School scores 100% pass rate for 24th time'. As part of the school's academic activities, extra lessons are compulsory from Monday to Friday for identified learners falling behind in their curriculums. Learners also have tutor groups to assist each other as peers. Parent evenings are held in all the school terms to assess the academic performance of each learner with their parents/guardians. In addition, I have observed that prize-giving events which are held every year to reward top performers amongst the learners are highly regarded by the school. As part of efforts to maintain the school's high academic status, learners participate in science and mathematics Olympiads from time to time which are run nationally.

Other important school activities for new learners' adaptation

Apart from the activities and events previously mentioned, the school also provides a systematic orientation programme for newcomers. For instance, 9 and 12 January 2019 were new learners' orientation and new learners' parents days, respectively. On those days, the new learners and the parents were introduced to the school rules, the school's expectations of the learners and the role that parents can play in supporting their daughters to adjust to the new school environment. The new learners and parents were also advised of the implications of undesirable behaviours such as alcohol and drug abuse, ill social media tendencies and bullying, among other bad behaviours.

In conclusion, from the observations made pertaining to school activities, events and practices, it is evident that the Catholic school environment is a platform for learners to engage in religious events as well as sports, academic, cultural and social activities during the school year. From my own assessment it is not clear whether the school has an existing follow-up process to check the progress made by the new learners in adjusting to the new environment.