THE FORD RESOURCE AND ENGAGEMENT CENTRE (FREC) PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO MITIGATING POVERTY: PERSPECTIVES FROM EARLY EXIT AND CURRENTLY ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS

BY

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ABSTRACT

THE FORD RESOURCE AND ENGAGEMENT CENTRE (FREC) PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO MITIGATING POVERTY: PERSPECTIVES FROM EARLY EXIT AND CURRENTLY ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS

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The United Nations (2015:5) has identified poverty as the greatest global challenge, making its eradication a priority at a global, regional, and national levels (AU, 2015; RSA, 2012; UN, 2015). While plans have been outlined to combat poverty, collective action from all stakeholders is required for meaning action (Davie, 2015:3). The FREC programme, as an incubator for micro-businesses and a trainer of entrepreneurs, can be considered as one of these stakeholders. However, its role in mitigating poverty and contributing to sustainable livelihoods is unknown.

The goal of the study was to explore the FREC programme's contribution to mitigating poverty from the perspectives of early exit and currently enrolled participants. This study was explored within the theoretical framework of the sustainable livelihoods framework.

The study employed a qualitative research approach, and the type of research was applied. The research design was a case study, and purposive sampling was used to select five early exit and five currently enrolled participants from the FREC programme. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted for data collection, and the data was analysed thematically. Data quality was ensured by assessing the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

The findings indicate that participants joined the FREC programme primarily to enhance their entrepreneurial knowledge and skills and to access financial support. Participants reported improvements in their social and economic wellbeing as a result of their engagement in the FREC programme, although these improvements were not substantial. The findings suggest that participants believe the FREC programme has the potential to bring about long-term, sustainable change in their livelihoods. Participants also provided suggestions for how the FREC programme could be improved to increase its impact on poverty mitigation.

The study concludes that the FREC programme contributes to mitigating poverty, according to both early exit and currently enrolled participants. The entrepreneurial skills and insights gained through the programme have a positive impact on participants' social and economic well-being. The study recommends that the FREC programme partners with established businesses to provide funding and mentoring, enhances the role of facilitators, and integrate developmental social work to strengthen social development partnerships, ensuring more prominent and sustainable outcomes.

KEY WORDS

FREC programme

Mitigation of poverty

Participants' perspectives

Early exit participants

Sustainable livelihoods

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ACRONYMS

2030 Agenda	2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Agenda 2063	Agenda 2063: The Africa we want
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ANC	African National Congress
AU	African Union
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DFID	Department for International Development
FREC	Ford Resource and Engagement Centre
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
NDP	National Development Plan 2030
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVC	New Venture Creation
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
SMMEs	Small, Micro, and Medium-sized Enterprises
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
TA	Thematic Analysis
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY[1]

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty seems to entangle many livelihoods as the World Bank approximates that of South Africa's 59.3 million citizens, more than half are living at or below the national upper poverty line (Geron, 2022:2). A greater concern nonetheless is the assumption that poverty is generally understood to be merely the lack of an income. This is a misconception, as Taylor (2019:132) states that "poverty is not only the lack of income, which in turn leads to deprivation; however, it is also a lack of access to public facilities and programmes (such as social welfare services, health, education, and transport)". The indisputable, multidimensional impact of poverty has therefore commanded attention from all people in that the eradication thereof is a priority on global, regional, and national agendas. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [hereafter 2030 Agenda] recognises that eradicating poverty in all its dimensions is the greatest global challenge and a crucial requirement for sustainable development (United Nations (UN), 2015:5). In addition, the Agenda 2063: The Africa we want [hereafter Agenda 2063] and the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) outline how the region and nation have adhered to the global call to eradicate poverty (African Union (AU), 2015; Republic of South Africa (RSA), 2012). Moreover, corporate companies, faith-based organisations, and non-governmental organisations such as Future Families have responded to the urgency of contributing to the alleviation of poverty.

Future Families is a non-governmental organisation that renders psychosocial services to various target groups, including orphans, vulnerable children, and people infected and affected with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) (Future Families, 2010). The organisation has various programmes as vehicles of intervention in communities, and one of these programmes is the Ford Resource and Engagement Centre (FREC) programme. The FREC programme aims to

[1] The study formed part of a group research topic that was investigated by the 2021 MSW Social Development & Policy coursework programme. The general introduction of the study, the problem statement and rationale of the study, the goal and objectives, the research questions and sub-questions, and the research methods of the study were similarly described by the researchers. Each student conducted an independent study as captured in individual research reports.

mentor entrepreneurs and create an incubator for microbusinesses in pursuit of making FREC programme participants self-sustainable. Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:110) state that promoting entrepreneurship processes ultimately promotes the growth of microbusinesses. In the FREC programme, the growth of microbusinesses is regarded as a joint effort between the facilitators and those enrolled in the programme. People who enrol in the FREC programme either have an established microbusiness or are in pursuit of sustainable livelihoods. Although having a business is the end goal of the programme, prospective FREC programme participants are commonly motivated to enrol in the programme due to poverty and unemployment. The programme becomes a journey in which poverty is addressed and could range from survival to alleviation to eradication of poverty.

The study determined the contribution of the FREC programme in pursuit of mitigating poverty, in retrospect to the perspectives of the participants. From a developmental social work point of view that is concerned with addressing poverty, social and economic development, sustainable development, and participation, the views of the participants are necessary to understand their lived experiences concerning the mitigation of poverty by the programme. Their views enabled the researcher to understand whether the FREC programme as a microbusiness incubator contributes to mitigating poverty. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) was an appropriate theoretical lens to interpret the study as it involves considering that poverty is a multifaceted concept that considers a range of assets (Krantz, 2001 in Lombard, 2019:180).

The following concepts have been identified as the key concepts for the study:

FREC programme

The Ford Resource and Engagement Centre is a programme whose main purpose is to provide training, mentorship, and potential funding in Tshwane, Gauteng, for microbusinesses (Future Families, 2010). The study did not focus on the whole of Tshwane, however, more specifically on Mamelodi and Nellmapius, which are townships in Tshwane where most of the programme's activities take place.

Mitigate

Mitigation is defined by Madhav, Oppenheim, Gallivan, Mulembakani, Rubin and Wolfe (2018) as “a type of preparedness and response intervention categorised by its time concerning the emergence of a crisis”. Therefore, for this study, ‘mitigate’ was adopted as the intervention by the FREC programme in response to the alleviation of poverty, which has been a timeless crisis.

Poverty

The UN (2015:19) alludes to the fact that poverty is multifaceted, and its reduction should be according to national definitions. The NDP 2030 identifies the facets of poverty to be tackled as the need to increase employment and broaden opportunities through education, vocational training and work experience, public employment programmes, health and nutrition, public transport, and access to information (RSA, 2012:28). The study adopted the NDP’s view of poverty in all its facets, as they also correlate with the assets highlighted in the SLF (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2).

Participants

Participants relate to participation, which Thomas and Pierson (2010:384) define as “taking part in." These authors understand participants in social work practice “to mean the process of involving service users and carers in the decisions that affect their lives and achieving change” (Thomas & Pierson, 2010:384). Applied to this study, participants referred to the individuals who were registered or dropped out of the FREC programme.

1.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for the study was the SLF. The Department for International Development (DFID) (1999: Section 2.1) states that the SLF “is a tool to improve understanding of livelihoods, particularly the livelihoods of the poor." The DIFD (1999: Section 1.1) further states that a livelihood is sustainable when it can manage and recover from vulnerabilities and maintain its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base. The SLF guided the study to understand what the vulnerabilities of participants are and how the FREC programme influences

livelihood strategies to achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes. The SLF will be discussed in further detail in Section 2.6 of Chapter 2.

1.3. RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

South Africans are living at or below the poverty line, with over half of the population (Geron, 2022:2), with an unemployment rate of 31.9% (Statistics South Africa (STATS SA), 2023) and high living costs contributing to catastrophic poverty. However, ending poverty is a global, regional, and national priority (AU, 2015; RSA, 2012; UN, 2015).

Poverty is multi-faceted and affects people's standard of living in all its dimensions (UNDP, 2021). Different forms of capital are needed for sustainable livelihoods, including human, natural, financial, social, and physical capital (DFID, 1999). The FREC programme mentor entrepreneurs to start or grow microbusinesses to become self-sustainable. However, it is not clear what the nature of entrepreneurship is in the FREC programme, ranging from survivalist to sustainable livelihood outcomes. It is not known why participants join the FREC programme, what role poverty plays in their decision to join, and what makes them continue after joining while others drop out of the programme. Moreover, it is not known how the different phases of the FREC programme play a role in mitigating participants' poverty and how the programme bridges their needs to attain sustainable livelihoods.

The rationale for the study is embedded in promoting social work from a developmental perspective, which includes investment in social and economic strategies. The study employed the SLF to examine FREC members' vulnerabilities and capital and how the programme's structures and processes support livelihood strategies or should be changed to achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes. It is envisaged that the research findings will inform the policy and practice framework of the FREC programme as a livelihood strategy that reduces poverty for sustainable livelihood outcomes.

The researcher considered the following research question and sub-questions to guide the study.

Research question:

- How does the FREC programme contribute to mitigating poverty from the early exit and currently enrolled participants' perspective?

Research sub-questions:

- What are the reasons for participants to join the FREC Programme?
- How does the FREC Programme align with the needs of the participants for sustainable livelihood outcomes?
- How have participants' social and economic well-being changed since joining the FREC programme?
- What strategies are recommended to contribute to sustainable livelihood outcomes?

1.4. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.4.1. Goal of the study

The goal of the study was to explore the FREC programme's contribution to mitigating poverty from the early exit and currently enrolled participants' perspective.

1.4.2. Objectives of the study

The goal of the study was achieved through the below objectives:

- To contextualise the FREC programme within the Sustainable Livelihood Framework.
- To determine the reasons for participants joining the FREC programme.
- To explore the alignment between the goals of the FREC programme and the needs of the participants for sustainable livelihood outcomes.
- To explore what has changed in participants' social and economic well-being since joining the FREC programme.
- To recommend strategies to contribute to sustainable livelihood outcomes.

1.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The section provides a brief overview of the research methodology that was applied in the study. A detailed presentation of the research methodology is provided in Chapter 3. The study utilised the qualitative research approach, which is exploratory as it is most applicable when there is little or no knowledge about a phenomenon or situation (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:61). The research type used was applied research as it allows for the solution of immediate social problems (Adler & Clark, 2015:360), which in this study has been identified as reducing poverty through sustainable livelihood strategies. The case study design was applied in this study as it enabled the researcher to learn about real-world behaviours (Akhtar, 2016:75) in natural settings such as the FREC facilities.

The population of the study consisted of participants who were registered in the FREC programme and those who dropped out between the years 2021 and 2022. The researcher used purposive sampling as this technique allows for sampling to be done with a specific purpose in mind (Maree & Pietersen, 2020:220), guided by set criteria for the study. Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews were used, which allowed the researcher to have an interview schedule whilst also being able to probe further and seek clarification (Nieuwenhuis, 2020:108). The data analysis followed in the study was thematic analysis according to its six phases, as highlighted by Terry, Hayfield, Clarke and Braun (2017:12). The study adopted ethical considerations applicable to this study, which will be thoroughly deliberated in Chapter 3 (see sub-section 3.7).

1.6. DIVISION OF RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction and orientation of the study. It includes the context of the study, the concepts relevant to the study, the theoretical framework applied to the study, the problem statement, the research question, the goal and objectives of the study, a summary of the research methodology, and an overview of the division of the research report.

Chapter 2 comprises a thorough literature review of the research topic. It includes a discussion of poverty in its multi-dimensional forms, the context and content of the FREC

programme, entrepreneurship and microbusinesses, and a discussion of developmental social work concerning the study topic.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including the research strategy and approach, type of research, research design, research methods, pilot study, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings of the empirical study.

Chapter 5 discusses how the goal and objectives of the study have been achieved, presents the key findings of the study, draws conclusions from the study and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Poverty remains an issue of great concern on a global, regional, and national scale. In South Africa, there is anxiety amongst civilians that although poverty is a key socioeconomic issue, it is highly unlikely for the government to improve the situation soon (Geron, 2022:2). Despite the view shared by some to solely consider the government as an agent of change to combat poverty, the African Union (AU) (2015:11) states that the eradication of poverty requires multi-faceted organisations to find multi-faceted approaches to address poverty. It is for this reason that the five-phased FREC programme must be considered if it contributes to the mitigation of poverty, as Yadav (2019:141) asserts that sustainable livelihoods depend on peace and opportunities to generate income within local communities. The SLF is comprehensive and inclusive in understanding how people live (DFID, 1999). Integrating the SLF with developmental social welfare is meaningful for the study in that developmental social welfare emphasises social and economic exclusion (Patel, 2015:205).

The chapter begins with the conceptualising and contextualising of poverty in the global, regional, and national spheres. The next section elucidates the FREC programme to thoroughly understand what it entails. To further appreciate the core of the FREC programme, a discussion on microbusinesses and entrepreneurship follows to explore its potential to mitigate poverty. To this end, the discussion next shifts to the principles of developmental social work, followed by a discussion on sustainable livelihoods as a theoretical framework to mitigate poverty. The chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2. POVERTY

Poverty is an ancient social ill, as Taylor (2019a:132) states that one of the first poverty studies was done over a century ago by Seebohm Rowntree. Granting that progress has been created in eradicating poverty over recent decades, the number of people still living in poverty remains offensively high (Healy, 2019:1). Furthermore, 692 million people across the globe are still living in severe poverty and have difficulty fulfilling their most basic needs (Poverty, Prosperity and Planet Report, 2024:1). Despite these concerning

statistics, Davie (2015:2) states that poverty is human-made and can therefore be eradicated through human actions; hence giving hope for better livelihoods. Being a global problem, it is necessary to consider global, regional, and national perspectives and strategies to combat poverty. The scope of poverty is best understood as a multidimensional phenomenon, as will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.1. Dimensions and implications of poverty

Various authors (Taylor, 2019a:132; UNDP, 2016:5; UN, 2015:19) agree that poverty has multiple dimensions. According to Taylor (2019a:142), some of the aspects of poverty that are considered when measuring multidimensional poverty are: education, health, sanitation, and basic needs such as electricity. In addition, the NDP (RSA, 2012:23) identifies unemployment, public transportation, and access to information as dimensions that need to be addressed to combat poverty. Taylor (2019a:132) states that recently another dimension has been added, which is vulnerability and voicelessness. The study intended to give voice to the research participants by sharing their experiences and exploring whether the FREC programme addresses any dimensions of poverty that affect their livelihoods.

Addae-Korankye (2014:148) highlights that the various dimensions of poverty have a causal and complex relationship between them, and as a result, the dimensions affect each other. The multiple dimensions of poverty thus have multiple implications (Healy, 2019:1). An implication of poverty stated in the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015:8) is that it negates people of their dignity, which is of importance to social work as one of its core principles. Another implication of poverty is the economic exclusion of young people (Davie, 2015:1). Addae-Korankye (2014:150) agrees and further argues that this exclusion implies that individuals are denied participation in the labour market and hence experience long-term unemployment. Mitigating the multiple dimensions and implications of poverty requires an understanding of the global, regional, and national perspectives and interventions implemented in these spheres.

2.2.2. Poverty in the global context

The 2030 Agenda highlights that poverty is the greatest challenge on the globe (UN, 2015:6). Although efforts are being created to mitigate poverty, the annual report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016:5) acknowledges that factors such as epidemics, violence, climate change, and natural disasters can challenge the progress of those who have escaped poverty. Healy (2019:5) states that pandemics become shocks that push people further into poverty. The most recent global shock was the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which, according to Sumner, Hoy and Ortiz-Juarez (2020:1), impacted the poverty and unemployment rates in developing countries. The UNDP (2016:30) states that poverty is on the rise in developed countries, although developing countries still account for many people living in extreme poverty. Nevertheless, the UN (2015:5) mentions that it will require sustainable communities to focus on interventions that eradicate poverty by promoting social, economic, and environmental justice. The researcher is of the view that this sustainable perspective by the UN is appropriate to the SLF adapted for this study, as one of its core principles is that it is people-centred.

The SLF further seeks to investigate the livelihoods of poor people. The Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report (2024:50) states that the global poverty line in lower-middle-income countries considers a person to be in extreme poverty when that individual lives on less than $2.15 a day. The Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report (2024:6) states that despite the decline in extreme poverty over the past three decades in Sub-Saharan Africa, other regions had rapid progress. The following section will give a regional perspective on poverty in Africa.

2.2.3. Poverty in the regional context

One major devastation concerning Africa is that it has the richest natural resources, yet it is static in growth, and it is the world's poorest continent (Addae-Korankye, 2014:147). Healy (2019:10) adds that in comparison to the global average, sub-Saharan Africa has established dilatory progress in poverty reduction. According to Tandi and Mawere (2018:2), sub-Saharan Africa is exclusively the region in the world where the number of people living below the poverty line is extremely high. The Poverty, Prosperity and Planet

Report (2024:6) further states that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people living in extreme poverty has almost doubled, increasing from 282 million in 1990 to 464 million in 2024. Yet regrettably, Adeyeye, Ashaolu, Bolaji, Abegunde and Omoyajowo (2023:647) state that African countries are the considerable core of corruption in the world, and as a result, available resources are accrued amongst a few greedy leaders.

Despite these demoralising views and statistics, the AU remains determined to eradicate poverty. The Agenda 2063 stipulates that in the coming decades, poverty will be eradicated through "enhanced investment in the productive capacities (skills and assets) of our people, improving incomes, creating jobs, and providing necessities of life" (AU, 2015:14). The researcher acknowledges this plan and ambition of the African Union in that it considers the multidimensional aspect of poverty. Tandi and Mawere (2018:118) partially agree with the AU's strategy to combat poverty, although they believe that poverty can be eradicated explicitly by empowering people in an individual and group capacity. The AU (2015:19), on the other hand, argues that a platform should be afforded to stakeholders on an annual basis where the progress of the implementation of Agenda 2063 can be reviewed at regional and national levels. It is thus necessary to consider the national context of poverty and its alignment with the global and regional contexts.

2.2.4. Poverty in the national context

The 2030 Agenda's vision to reduce poverty explains that poverty should be reduced in all its dimensions (UN, 2015:19). For South Africa, however, defining poverty could be a challenge, as Davie (2015:16) states that, although the African National Congress (ANC) has named poverty reduction as one of its primary goals, there does not seem to be an agreement on how to define the word poverty. Furthermore, there is a concern that the political issues in South Africa are the cause of the unlikelihood of an improvement in socioeconomic issues, including poverty (Geron, 2022:2). Davie (2015:2) agrees with the fact that political issues are an impediment to the improvement of socioeconomic concerns and adds that poverty is often used for political gain, which causes unrest.

Despite the critiques by various authors, the NDP 2030 (RSA, 2012:25) does take into cognisance that poverty is multidimensional, as the proposed strategy for poverty reduction includes higher incomes, improved standard of living for the poor and good-

quality public services. Tragically, although the NDP has set out these strategies, STATS SA (2024) states that the current unemployment rate is 32.9%. It is for this reason that Davie (2015:1) critiques the South African government and states that more focus should be given to job creation instead of the issuance of social grants. However, Healy (2019:5) asserts that there is no single solution to eradicate poverty, necessitating the exploration of various strategies. The researcher will next explore the FREC programme and its possible potential to mitigate poverty.

2.3. THE FREC PROGRAMME

It is commonly believed that the government is solely responsible for employing poverty reduction strategies; however, Davie (2015:3) states that poverty is a prejudice that commands urgent, effective, and collective action. Tandi and Mawere (2018:2) agree as they state that partnerships between the government and the people allow for the implementation of policies to mitigate poverty. The section will provide a detailed overview of the FREC programme, and the various phases participants go through as part of the programme.

According to Learmonth (2022), who is the head of the FREC programme, the Ford Motor Company initially desired to replicate international economic support to individuals and communities in South Africa by developing their entrepreneurial skills. As a result, Ford Motor Company in Mamelodi partnered with Future Families, which is a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) that already existed in the community. According to Learmonth (2022), the FREC programme was established in 2015 to provide training in obtaining entrepreneurial skills. The strategy, however, had to be reformed after the COVID-19 predicament as the programme grew to a microbusiness incubator and entrepreneur mentoring programme (Learmonth, 2022). According to Matakanure (2022), the entrepreneurship training specialist of the FREC programme, prospective students must undergo registration and screening and attend a seminar on running a small business before beginning with the programme. The FREC programme utilises the New Venture Creation (NVC) curriculum, which consists of 13 modules. Prospective students are required to complete Modules 1 and 2 of the NVC as a prerequisite to the programme; they are allowed to discuss business ideas.

2.3.1. The phases of the FREC programme

Prospective students are enrolled in the five-phase FREC programme after completing the pre-admission criteria. Matakanure (2022) explains that most students start the programme in Phase 1, however, some who have established microbusinesses start the programme in Phase 4, depending on the progress of their business. Matakanure (2022) further explained that Modules 3 to 13 of the NVC are spread out throughout the five phases as discussed below.

- **Phase 1: Getting started**

The first official phase of the programme is marked by preceding the assessments and registration into the programme. Students are given a one-week internship at a FREC-supported microbusiness to provide all students with practical experience. Furthermore, to test their motivation and initiative, students are tasked with completing a preliminary business evaluation of their business idea. In addition, students conclude this phase as they complete Modules 3 and 4 of the NVC.

- **Phase 2: Business conceptualisation**

Students concentrate on developing their company idea throughout this phase, which leads to several assessments. The subsequent assessments conducted include the FREC-designed exam on microbusiness operations and interest evaluations to aid students in conceptualising their enterprises. Students are further screened and assisted in refining their product and completing version two of the financial model. The students go through a selection process where special considerations are created on small grants that can be given to deserving candidates. Finally, a FREC business potential evaluation is conducted where a minimum scoring is required; if not attained, students may be expected to repeat the evaluation. The phase is concluded with the completion of Modules 5 and 6 of the NVC.

- **Phase 3: Market research**

Students participate in real-life simulation activities, which makes this portion of the curriculum more alluring. Furthermore, students are required to have authentic evidence

of all the practical market research conducted. Moreover, they could have discussions on business risks, the level of invention, and competitive advantages. At this phase, they are required to complete Modules 7 and 8 of the NVC. On completion of phase 3, students have accredited NVC training, which is equivalent to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels 2 and 4. Moreover, they have experienced active participation in entrepreneur-specific mentoring.

- **Phase 4: Business plan development**

Students are given a FREC format to enable them to begin with the compilation of their business plan. Furthermore, students are allowed to test their service delivery at a minimal scale. The process allows them to gauge the interest from the target market, as this is on a free trial basis. In addition, students are required to complete Modules 9 and 10 of the NVC. An exciting element of this phase is that successful candidates may be given a significant grant or a loan to aid them with commercialisation via capital, equipment purchases, setup costs, and working capital.

- **Phase 5: Implementation and commercialisation**

Students are expected to get the necessary funding at this stage to commercialise and make their first sales. Furthermore, there is an expectation for them to ideally have three consecutive months of ongoing sales. In addition, they should have the ability to provide financial information in a usable format. Students must attain the required gross to support overheads, which is their drawing for a specific decent standard of living. In addition, they are required to have an approved bookkeeping system in order. Finally, Modules 11, 12, and 13 of the NVC must be completed.

Phases 4 and 5 are reported by Matakanure (2022) to be phases where candidates can graduate to the next level. Essentially, those who have completed phase 5 are regarded as post-graduation students, and they continue to receive mentorship to reach stabilisation in their businesses. Once stabilisation is achieved, the aspiration is for them to enlarge their business to gradually wean from the FREC programme. Considering that the core of the FREC programme is about microbusinesses and entrepreneurship, in the next section the researcher will delve into these concepts to understand how

microbusinesses and entrepreneurship can contribute to sustainable livelihoods and reduce poverty.

2.4. MICROBUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 aims to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth by promoting entrepreneurship and small, micro, and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) (UN, 2015:23). Regarding this study, the efforts of the FREC programme can be recognised at a global and regional level as having the potential to mitigate poverty, considering their mandate. According to Mamman, Kanu, Alharbi and Baydoun (2015:5), African SMMEs experts state that new, sustainable SMMEs must be pioneered for the economic prosperity of Africa. Audretsch and Belitski (2017) in Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:110) emphasise the wide impact of entrepreneurship by stating that entrepreneurship has been regarded as a crucial instrument in many countries that drive economic growth. The following subsections will discuss microbusinesses, entrepreneurship, and the various types of entrepreneurs.

2.4.1. The potential of microbusinesses

Microbusinesses are commonly integrated with SMMEs. In addition, microbusinesses and microenterprises are terms used interchangeably, which Mamman et al. (2015:12) define as “enterprises which employ fewer than 10 people and whose annual turnover or annual balance sheet total does not exceed 2 million euros." As observed by the UN (2015:14), microbusinesses have a role to play in poverty reduction. Mamman et al. (2015:5) refer to the findings of a study that proved a strong relationship between SMMEs, economic growth, and poverty reduction. In agreement, Maduku and Kaseeram (2021:665) state that South Africa requires microbusinesses that will expand and thrive, as this will enable people to move out of poverty, unemployment, and other socioeconomic ills. Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:112) provide evidence that small enterprises account for approximately 70% of job creation and contribute about 60% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in many African countries. At a national level, in South Africa, microenterprises and SMMEs employ between 60% and 80% of the labour force (Gumede, 2024 in Schultz, 2024:1).

The researcher concludes that the FREC programme may be able to help reduce poverty given the connection between microbusinesses, entrepreneurship, and poverty at the national, regional, and worldwide levels. Considering Maduku and Kaseeram's (2021:668) argument that there is a positive relationship between the success of SMMEs and the entrepreneurs' level of skills and training, the researcher concludes that the success of microbusinesses also depends on the various types of entrepreneurs, which will be explored in the next section.

2.4.2. Entrepreneurship and types of entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship is described by Bhatt (2016:16) as "a human creative act, involved in building a team of people with complementary skills and talents". Masciarelli and Leonelli (2020:15), on the other hand, describe entrepreneurship as the process that brings about new economic activities and organisations. Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:111) state that for native Africans, entrepreneurship resolves the issue of an income gap. The above statement could be true for FREC students, as Learmonth (2022) suggests that some students enrol in the programme due to a lack of income. Income serves as a motive for enrolling since Masouras (2019:3) asserts that entrepreneurship eventually facilitates the accumulation of wealth to satisfy fundamental necessities. Obtaining entrepreneurial capabilities is another motivational factor for enrolment, as the lack of entrepreneurial abilities is one of the factors that exacerbate poverty (Addae-Korankye, 2014:149). While entrepreneurial qualities are important, the variety of entrepreneurship types can motivate enrolment by explaining entrepreneurs' motives, which affect their success.

Bhatt (2016:16) states that an entrepreneur is someone who establishes a business for personal benefits and the provision of job opportunities for other people. Various authors (Mamun, Fazal, & Zainol, 2019:415; Zhang & Acs, 2018:773; Bhatt, 2016:27; Scheidgen, 2021:15) report multiple types of entrepreneurs according to various contexts. For this study, the researcher focused on three types: adoptive or imitative entrepreneur, the new necessity baby boomer, and the pure entrepreneur. Bhatt (2016:29) defines the adoptive or imitative entrepreneur as one who does not have innovations, however, tends to replicate existing innovations that are already successful. Another type of entrepreneur is the new necessity baby boomer, whom Zhang (2019:65) describes as one who resolves

to entrepreneurship. Zhang asserts that the pure entrepreneur is a type of entrepreneur who has already established a microbusiness. According to Bhatt (2016:29), this entrepreneur is characterised by a motivation that is psychologically and economically rewarding.

For Bhatt (2016:29), entrepreneurs in general are mainly differentiated by pull and push factors. Pull factors are those that positively attract individuals to business, such as independence, financial gain, and community service, whereas push factors are those circumstances like unemployment and other challenges that compel people to establish an enterprise due to being disadvantaged (Bhatt, 2016:25). Considering the discussion above regarding the increased number of people in poverty and the exploration of strategies to eradicate poverty, it is key to also understand the various dynamics from a developmental social work point of view, which is concerned with the inclusion of the poor in their social and economic development.

2.5. DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WORK

The researcher defines developmental social work and explains its topics in depth in this section. Gray, Agillias, Mupedziswa and Mugubate (2017:975) state that developmental social work confirms the profession's commitment to the eradication of poverty and acknowledges the link between welfare and economic development and investment in human capital. It is with this understanding that the researcher, as a social worker, was intrigued by the FREC programme, as it seems to link social and economic development.

Development social work is participatory and rights-based, and its engagements and developments are multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial, respectively (Gray et al. 2017:975). Furthermore, the essence of developmental social work is rooted in developmental social welfare. According to Gray (2006) in Triegaardt (2019:65), “developmental social welfare is the name given to South Africa's post-apartheid welfare system informed by the theory of social development”. Triegaardt (2019:65) further states that the introduction of this welfare system in South Africa was reasoned due to its inclusivity and egalitarian nature that could reach the bulk of poor persons.

According to Taylor (2019b:102), developmental social welfare aims to ensure that those who are excluded, at risk, and vulnerable have their economic and social rights protected and promoted. The developmental social welfare system thus partially aligns with the vision of the 2030 Agenda that focuses on the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental (UN, 2015:6). It is, therefore, meaningful to explore developmental social welfare in-depth, as its various themes are based on alleviating poverty. It also fits the theoretical framework of this study since developmental social welfare, like the SLF, promotes the involvement of the poor in poverty reduction and social and economic growth.

2.5.1. The themes of developmental social work

The comprehension of developmental social welfare and its themes serves as a commendable guide to developmental social work and what the role of the profession is. According to Yadav (2019:131), developmental social work must be people-centred and should focus on building on the strengths of the community. Moreover, Gray et al. (2017:976) contend that in developmental social work, microenterprises have become a turning point as authentic empowerment is manifested in economic dependence. According to Patel (2015:82), there are five themes embedded in developmental social welfare: “a rights-based approach; economic and social development; democracy and participation; social welfare pluralism; and bridging the micro and macro divide”. The researcher will therefore briefly expand on the various themes mentioned.

2.5.1.1. A rights-based approach

Human rights can be quantified and interpreted in multiple forms. For instance, various authors (Androff, 2016; Hartely, 2015; Ife, 2012) refer to the three generations of rights, which are: first-generation rights consisting of civil and political rights; second-generation rights, including economic, social and cultural rights; and third-generation rights include the right to peace and a clean environment. Triegaardt (2019:66), on the other hand, explains that the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), particularly the Bill of Rights, makes provision for several rights that compel the state to yield results.

Furthermore, the author explains that these rights are inclusive of economic and social rights such as the right to housing (section 26); privileges such as health care, food, water, shelter, and social security (section 27); and the right to education (section 29). The rights alluded to herein are relevant to the study in that they can be utilised as a yardstick to measure if the programme does indeed mitigate poverty, as Davie (2013:2) states that the eradication of poverty is a human right. Androff (2016:27) urges that social work must be conceived from a rights-based approach to ensure that its practice is consistent with human rights.

2.5.1.2. Social and economic development

A developmental state requires that there be a balance between social and economic development; as a result, the two ought to be well integrated to avoid a biased development (Triegaardt, 2019:67). Lombard and Twikirize (2014) in Gray and Lombard (2022:431) state that developmental welfare initially challenged social workers to partake in processes that support socio-economic inclusion. Harrison, VanDeusen and Way (2016:259) contest that social workers are summoned to be justice-focused on their practice, with social and economic justice as one of the core values of the profession. Comprehending the importance of social and economic development is therefore crucial to the study in that the FREC programme focuses on socio-economic empowerment. Furthermore, Addae-Korankye (2014:148) states that the definition of poverty stresses economic opportunity. Melamed (2015) also mentions the importance of investing in people for their economic inclusion, which is in alignment with Addae-Korankye's (2014:149) argument that the poor are said to lack relevant skills, knowledge, and personal development that could enhance their livelihoods. The FREC programme is consequently worth exploring considering that it seeks to invest in human capital, which is one of the assets of the SLF.

2.5.1.3. Democracy and participation

Democracy, according to Patel (2015:91), generally means a determination for political equality, the protection of freedom, and the defence of society's interests. Triegaardt (2019:67) adds that democracy implies that people rule for themselves and of themselves. Democracy thus emphasises the role of participation of all people to give

them a voice regarding matters that concern them. Yadav (2019:141) argues that developmental social work must be participatory, people-centred, and have community-based strategies that are aimed at developing sustainable livelihoods and having income-generating programmes whilst engaging multiple stakeholders. The understanding of democracy and participation is meaningful for this study in that the participants are given a platform to have a voice regarding the effectiveness of the FREC programme in mitigating poverty in their livelihoods.

2.5.1.4. Welfare pluralism or social development partnerships

Welfare pluralism, or social development partnerships, according to Triegaardt (2019:68), refers to a range of stakeholders who have similar developmental objectives that they support and hope to accomplish for underserved segments of society. Furthermore, Patel (2015:93) elaborates that these stakeholders could include the government sector, the commercial or business sector, and the voluntary and non-governmental organisations that assist those in need. The FREC programme has stakeholders given that there are partnerships between the Ford Company in the commercial sector and Future Families in the non-governmental sector. Social workers can also partner with projects that have the potential for developmental social welfare practice of micro-economic interventions for poverty alleviation (Keevers, 2022:78).

2.5.1.5. Bridging the micro and macro divide

The significance of bridging micro and macro interventions is underscored by developmental social welfare. Patel (2015:98) states that interventions aimed at individuals and families at a micro level and macro interventions must be bridged to ensure that structures and institutions that encourage social and economic injustice are transformed. In addition, Rothman and Mizrahi (2017:91) challenge social workers to rectify the era of an imbalance in their focus between micro and macro interventions. Social workers could consider the SLF, which will be discussed in the following section, as a framework and lens to bridge the micro and macro divide.

2.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDY

Considering that poverty is such a wide-ranging social ill, an extensive framework is required that can consider various aspects for the mitigation of poverty. The SLF was thus identified for the study as Lombard (2019b:179,188-190) states that sustainable livelihoods are a broad and inclusive approach to addressing the needs of poor people directly and at a policy level. The SLF has various components that are relevant to the study, as will be discussed in this section.

Sustainable livelihood approaches are a way of thinking about development priorities anchored in sustainable livelihood principles and drawing on various tools, such as the sustainable livelihood framework (Ashley & Carney, 1999:9). The core principles of sustainable livelihoods are people-centred, responsive and participatory, multi-level, conducted in partnership, sustainable, and dynamic (Ashley & Carney, 1999:6). The SLF, developed by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) (1999: Section 1.1), forms the centre of the sustainable livelihood approaches since it serves as the instrument for investigating poor people's livelihoods while envisaging the main factors of influence (Kollmair & Gamper, 2002:4).

The SLF includes the capabilities, assets, and activities essential for the means of living (Van Breda, 2019:250). It consists of five components, which are the vulnerability context, livelihood assets, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies, and livelihood outcomes (DFID, 1999). These components will be discussed next to determine their relevance to the study.

2.6.1. Vulnerability context

Levine (2014:4) asserts that vulnerability settings are inherently complex, including characteristics of economic, political, formal, and informal power interactions and institutions—"each" of which will have various impacts on different people, and the interactions between the forces are almost infinitely complex. The vulnerability context consists of trends, shocks, and seasonality. The shocks that the FREC participants are faced with include extreme poverty and high levels of unemployment. It necessitates identifying these shocks as Natarajan et al. (2022:11) state that the vulnerability context

focuses on the causes and solutions to vulnerability. The study will identify the vulnerability of participants concerning their livelihoods.

2.6.2. Assets

The assets are the core of the SLF, which includes human capital, natural capital, financial capital, social capital, and physical capital (DFID, 1999). Serrat (2017:23) recognises the same capital assets and further elaborates that human capital comprises health, education, and skills. Formal and informal groups, networks, and shared ideals are examples of social capital, whereas land, water, and environmental services represent natural capital. Physical capital comprises transportation, safe shelter, and communication, while financial capital includes savings, debt, and pay. The researcher explored these assets when interviewing the participants to determine what constraints or enhances livelihood opportunities (see Chapter 4, Theme 3).

2.6.3. Livelihood strategies

Levie (2014:4) argues that for one to understand the strategies of people's livelihoods, two questions must be answered: "What are different people doing to make a living? and "Why are they doing what they are doing?". Through the FREC programme, participants are guided in establishing their businesses as a means of making a living. The programme could therefore have the potential of being a livelihood strategy in the mitigation of poverty. It is however not yet certain whether the FREC programme is a livelihood strategy, as Serrat (2017:24) states that livelihood strategies should ultimately achieve livelihood outcomes

2.6.4. Livelihood outcomes

Levie (2014:5) cautions that the comprehension of livelihood outcomes should not be restricted to the assessment of individuals' economic achievement, although they are a direct result of livelihood strategies. The author further states that livelihood outcomes, when assessed, should consider all the dimensions most important to the people involved. Livelihood outcomes that must be assessed include more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security, and more sustainable use of the natural resource base (DFID, 1999). Knowing more about participants' livelihood

outcomes will assist the researcher in identifying whether the FREC programme contributes to mitigating poverty or not.

2.6.5. Transforming structures and processes

Laws and policies, institutions, culture, and government and private sector organisations are all examples of altering structures and processes, according to DFID (1999). Transforming structures and processes can assist in effectively determining access to various capitals and the terms of exchange between different capitals and return to any given strategy (DFID, 1999). The FREC programme serves as a transforming structure as it links the participants with financial capital, human capital, and social capital. Based on this literature review, there is a nexus between the FREC programme and the SLF; however, the section to follow will provide an informative summary to connect all the facets discussed.

2.7. SUMMARY

The literature review in this chapter outlined that poverty is multidimensional and, as such, greatly affects the livelihoods of people. Statistics clearly show that a significant number of people worldwide continue to live in poverty. To this end, the eradication of poverty demands global, regional, and national bodies establish a plan of action, as seen in the 2030 Agenda, the Agenda 2063, and the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, respectively. The eradication of poverty requires collective action from government and non-governmental organisations. It has been discussed that microbusinesses can potentially play a role in the eradication of poverty as they create employment opportunities.

Finally, it was discussed that developmental social work is relevant to the study in that its five themes provide a broad framework for the eradication of poverty and the role that social workers can play in this regard. The SLF was presented as the appropriate theoretical framework for the study in that its broad, inclusive nature speaks to the multiple dimensions of poverty. The various components of the SLF are well linked with the phases of the FREC programme, which could guide the study and assist the researcher in answering the research questions.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter discusses the research methodology used for this study. The discussion starts with the research approach, followed by the type of research and the research design applied to the study. It further focuses on the research methodology, followed by a discussion of the pilot study, the ethical aspects considered in the study, and finally, the limitations of the study. The final section presents a summary of the chapter.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach used for this study was qualitative. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to seek answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who occupy these settings (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:59). Furthermore, the qualitative approach enabled the study to answer questions about the complex nature of whether the FREC programme mitigates poverty and understand it from the participant's point of view (Fouché, 2021:40). The goal of this study was therefore exploratory, as there is little knowledge about how the phenomenon of poverty is reduced by the FREC programme (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:61). The study used open, exploratory research questions to understand the research topic from participants' perspectives (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:66).

3.3. TYPE OF RESEARCH

The type of study was applied research. According to Adler and Clark (2015:360), in applied research, the researcher intends to solve immediate social problems and, in addition, suggests action that can be implemented in the future. In the context of this study, poverty was identified as a pressing social issue that needs resolution for the future. Applied research therefore allowed the researcher to explore how the FREC programme contributes to mitigating poverty, a social issue with multiple implications, including sustainable livelihood outcomes.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

Nieuwenhuis (2019:80) defines a research design as the plan of the study that shifts from the underlying philosophical assumption to specifying the selection of participants, the data collection methods that will be used, as well as the data analysis to be done. For Kumar (2019:396), a study design is a strategy that a researcher must follow to answer questions in a genuine, objective, correct, and affordable way.

The research design for this study was an exploratory design. According to Nieuwenhuis (2020:93) the exploratory design explores situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. Akhtar (2016:73) explains that this design is applicable when there are few or no earlier research that can be referred to for information. The exploratory design was best suited for the study, as no research had been previously conducted to understand the contribution of the FREC programme in the livelihoods of the participants. There was inadequate information as whether the FREC programme's intervention mitigates poverty. The exploratory designed enabled the researcher to answer the researcher question in an objective manner.

3.5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The following section presents the research methods that were applied in the study. The section includes the population and the sample of the study, the method of data collection, data analysis, and the trustworthiness of the data. Thereafter, the pilot study will be discussed.

3.5.1. Population, sample and sampling method

The accurate selection of the study population was a pivotal aspect of the study, as this was where the researcher had to obtain the data that would inform the achievement of the objectives of the study. Strydom (2011:223) explains that the population is the entirety of people, organisations, or sampling units with which the research problem is concerned. The study population was the FREC programme participants who enrolled in the programme between the years 2021 and 2022 and had at least completed phase 2 of the programme. Furthermore, the FREC programme participants included active participants and/or drop-outs located in the Mamelodi and Nellmapius areas in the city of Tshwane.

Following the identification of the study population, sampling was required to extract specific instances from the broader population (Adler & Clark, 2015:465). The sampling strategy suitable for this qualitative study was non-probability sampling, which Maree and Pietersen (2020:220) explain as a method that does not use random selection from the population. The researcher used the purposive sampling method, which "is used in special situations where the sampling is done with a specific purpose in mind" (Maree & Pietersen, 2020:220). The purposeful sampling method was most relevant for the study, as the researcher sampled 10 FREC programme participants who agreed to participate in the research and met the following criteria:

- Participants were registered in the FREC programme in 2021-2022.
- Participants were either in the programme or have dropped out of the programme in 2021-2022.
- Participants at least completed the second phase of the programme.
- Participants resided in Mamelodi or Nellmapius.
- Participants were male or female.
- Participants completed grade 12.
- Participants were able to speak English.

The manager of the FREC programme, who granted the researcher permission to conduct the study (see Appendix C), sought consent from potential participants to share their contact details with the researcher. Thereafter, the researcher was given access to the database by the manager of the FREC programme participants who met the criteria. The database consisted of the contact details of the participants, which the researcher used to telephonically contact and recruit them individually to participate in the study. After recruiting five early exit and five currently enrolled participants from the FREC programme via telephone, the researcher planned to meet each participant in person. When the researcher had obtained five early exit and five currently enrolled FREC programme participants who agreed to participate in the research study through telephonic recruitment. This allowed the researcher to provide a more detailed explanation of the study and obtain written consent from the participants.

The researcher conducted interviews with the five early exit and five currently enrolled participants which included the two participants who were selected for the pilot study. The interviews were conducted on different dates, with each participant agreeing on the interview schedule. Some interviews were conducted at the FREC premises whilst others took place at the participants' businesses or homes. The interviews ranged from 40 minutes to over an hour. By the tenth interview, the researcher realised that there was no new information coming forth from the participants. As data saturation had been reached as described by Fofana, Bazeley and Regnault (2020:2), the researcher therefore had no reason to recruit more participants or collect further data.

3.5.2. Data collection method

Data was collected in this research through semi-structured, one-on-one interviews. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the researcher to further probe and seek clarification from participants for rich data (Nieuwenhuis, 2020:108). An interview schedule, also known as an interview guide, was used as the data collection instrument for each participant group (see Appendices A and B). The interview guide consisted of predetermined questions, which enabled the researcher to collect similar types of data from participants (Mahat-Shamira, Neimeyer & Pitcho-Prelorentzos, 2021:84). The collection of similar types of data from the participants enabled the researcher to draw certain conclusions and make recommendations regarding the FREC programme's contribution in mitigating poverty.

The selected data collection method had some advantages for the study. The method enabled the researcher to have a form of structure concerning the research question, and it also allowed participants to provide new meanings to the study topic as it allowed further prompting (Buys, Casteleijn, Heyns & Untiedt, 2022:2034). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews facilitated a platform for the researcher to explore the lived experiences of the participants while also addressing the theoretical aspects of interest (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018:40). The researcher was therefore able to explore participants' experiences of the FREC programme through the lens of the SLF. As the participants narrated their lived experiences, the researcher could also observe and note non-verbal communication that enriched the data gathered.

Despite the positive outcomes that one-on-one interviews produce, they also have disadvantages. According to Hughes, Hughes and Cocq (2020:541), one-on-one interviews are time-consuming in comparison to focus groups as all participants are interviewed individually. Furthermore, one-on-one interviews are expensive as the researcher must travel several times to the location of the participants. The researcher, however, arranged to conduct more than one interview per day to minimise costs when it was possible. Another disadvantage identified by Klem, Bunzl, Smith and Shields (2022:9) is that one-on-one interviews do not allow for participants to bounce off ideas and experiences from each other, as in the case of a focus group. Therefore, they rely entirely on the researcher's probing to stimulating their thinking.

3.5.3. Data analysis

The data analysis process refers to an interpretive strategy employed to examine the subjective meaning ascribed by participants to how the FREC programme contributes to mitigating poverty (Nieuwenhuis, 2019:123). The researcher used thematic analysis (TA) to analyse the data set by identifying patterns and analysing those patterns about their commonalities and differences to establish codes and themes. Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017:1) define thematic analysis as an appropriate qualitative method that can be used when working in research teams and analysing enormous qualitative data. Terry et al. (2017:12) indicate that there are six phases of thematic analysis, which are: familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and producing a report. As described by Terry et al. (2017) and complemented by Nowell et al. (2017), the phases that the researcher used to analyse the data are described below.

- **Phase 1: Familiarisation**

Familiarisation begins during data collection when the researcher becomes intrigued by the responses (Terry et al., 2017:13). Nowell et al. (2017:6) add that irrespective of who collected the data, "it is crucial that researchers immerse themselves with the data to familiarise themselves with the depth and breadth of the content". The first phase was achieved by the researcher by asking questions, listening to audio recordings, re-reading

the transcripts, and analysing patterns. The researcher read and familiarised herself with the data derived from field notes and recordings.

- **Phase 2: Generating initial codes**

The researcher started creating preliminary programmes after becoming acquainted with the data. Nowell et al. (2017:6-7) indicate that at this phase, initial codes are generated from the data. The researcher then moved from raw and unstructured data to developing ideas about what was going on in the data.

- **Phase 3: Searching for themes**

The development of a comprehensive list of codes and the first coding of all data marked the beginning of this phase. During this phase, relevant coded data is sorted and collated to extract the coded data into themes (Nowell et al., 2017:8). At this point, the researcher looked at the codes by grouping them in columns according to main themes.

- **Phases 4 and 5: Reviewing themes and defining**

The review phase, namely phase 4, functions as a quality control procedure to verify that the themes align well with the coded data, the dataset, and the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2012:65). The evaluation process results in modifications to the candidate themes and/or thematic map or may need substantial additional analytical effort (Nowell et al., 2017:9). The researcher examined each theme's coded data extracts in phase 4 to see whether they seemed to follow a logical pattern.

Nowell et al. (2017:9–10) assert that the researcher outlines and designates the topics, and the process continues through repeated reviews, referred to as phase 5. In this phase, narrative involves telling a story based on the data, one that explains the patterns and variations in meaning. In this sense, it revolves around composing the analysis—the analytical story containing the given data excerpts. This then moves to the phase of assuring clarity, coherence, accuracy, and quality of the evolving thematic analysis. During phase 5, the researcher conducted and wrote a detailed analysis of each theme, identifying the story that each theme told.

- **Phase 6: Producing a report**

The generated themes were interpreted in relation the study's goal and verified against relevant literature in the final stage. As Terry et al. (2017:25) note, the researcher kept field notes throughout the process of data analysis, which enabled her to analyse and refine the findings in ways that answered the research question and linked trends and findings to literature. Furthermore, at any point of the analysis process, the researcher was able to revisit any of the phases of the data analysis where there were uncertainties in terms of the processes followed.

3.5.4. Data quality

The researcher evaluated the trustworthiness of the data to verify its quality. The four criteria considered for the trustworthiness of the study were credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Nowell et al., 2017:3). According to Anney (2014:276), credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of research findings. To ensure credibility, the researcher used two strategies of credibility, which are peer debriefing and member checks (Anney, 2014:277). The researcher used peer debriefing by seeking feedback from fellow students in the 2021 Master of Social Work (MSW) Social Development and Policy group, who provided comments and insights throughout the study.

The second trustworthiness criterion considered was transferability, which Nowell et al. (2017:3) refer to as the generalisability of inquiry. Anney (2014:278) indicates that to ensure the transferability of qualitative inquiry, the researcher must collect thick descriptive data that allows comparison of this context to other similar contexts. Purposive sampling ensures transferability as well, and it allows the researcher to select participants who are knowledgeable of the issues being investigated. The researcher provided thick descriptive data in discussing the findings.

The third trustworthiness criterion considered was dependability. To achieve dependability, researchers should ensure that the research process is logical, traceable, and documented (Nowell et al., 2017:3). According to Anney (2014:278), dependability can be established by using an audit trail, code-recode strategy, stepwise replication, and

peer examination. The researcher conducted an audit trail by establishing an examination of the inquiry process whereby she accounted for how data was collected, recorded, and analysed. The code-recode strategy was used by coding the same data twice and then comparing the findings to determine whether the findings remained consistent or differed.

The fourth trustworthiness criterion that the researcher used was conformability. Nowell et al. (2017:3) indicate that conformability has to do with establishing that the researcher's interpretations and findings are clearly resulting from the data and requires the researcher to demonstrate how conclusions and interpretations have been reached. The researcher utilised audit trails and reflexive journals to ensure conformability.

3.6. PILOT STUDY

Strydom (2021:386) states that a pilot study (also known as pilot testing) is usually informal and engages a few participants who have the same characteristics as those of the main investigation, merely to ascertain trends. The main aim of the pilot study was to improve the success and effectiveness of the investigation. The researcher selected the first interviews of each sample groups, the early exit and currently enrolled groups, for the pilot study. The data was included in the main study, as Strydom (2021:387) affirms that data from the pilot study may be used for the main study.

The data obtained from the pilot study were used to assess the compatibility and appropriateness of the research methods employed. The process included the use of sampling methods and the appropriateness of data collection and data analysis methods. Furthermore, the researcher was able to test the effectiveness of the interview schedule to make the necessary amendments before continuing with the study. However, no changes were required.

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Promoting and safeguarding every participant in a study is crucial. Fouché and Delport (2015:114) describe ethical considerations as "preferences that influence behaviour in human relations, conforming to a code of principles, the rules of conduct, the responsibility of a researcher, and the standards of conduct of a given profession". To ensure the protection of the participants and the credibility of the study, the researcher

obtained ethical clearance for the study from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria (see Appendix D). Mogorosi (2018:75) emphasised that obtaining ethical clearance before conducting research is central to good scientific inquiry, and that maintaining high ethical standards throughout the research process is essential. The following ethical considerations were adhered to in this study:

3.7.1. Confidentiality

The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act 4 of 2013 refers to the importance of the removal of personal identifiers from the research study. A breach of confidentiality may be applied where there is a risk of harm to the self or to others (International Federation of Social Workers, 2008), which has not been the case in this study. Furthermore, participants were given the option to not use their real names during the interviews, and they were informed that pseudonyms would be used in writing up the research.

3.7.2. Transparency and informed consent

The participants were informed of the study as captured in the informed consent letter, which they signed before participating in the study (see Appendix E). The participants were informed of the study's goal and objectives to ensure transparency, giving them the choice to decide whether or not to participate. Furthermore, participants were informed of the method of data collection, and consent was requested for voice recording. They were also informed that the voice recordings and transcripts would be securely stored at the University of Pretoria for 10 years before they were destroyed. Shirindi (2018:67) states that it is important to obtain written consent from participants that clearly outlines the rules of engagement. Amongst these rules, the researcher informed participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time without consequences. In addition, participants were informed that they were not obligated to answer any question they were uncomfortable with.

3.7.3. Voluntary participation

Participation was voluntary, and this was indicated as such in the informed consent letter. Mogorosi (2018:88) infers that participants should be informed of their right to, at any

point in the interview, state if they no longer want to participate in the study. The above-stated information was included in the informed consent. Fortunately, there were no participants who requested withdrawal from the study before the completion of their interview or study itself.

3.7.4. Prohibition of deception

The goal and objectives of the study were not overly exaggerated or underrated to convince participants to participate in it; instead, the importance of the study was shared with the participants. There was also no monetary payment or any incentives for participants as gratitude for partaking in the study. The participants were therefore not deceived in any sense or manipulated to participate in the study.

3.7.5. Avoidance of harm

Maree (2020:48) explains that the well-being of participants in the research process is of utter importance; therefore, possible harm must be avoided. The researcher consulted with the participants to ensure that the interviews were conducted in an environment where they felt at liberty to share their experiences in private. In addition, the researcher sought to avoid any psychological harm by being observant and listening to participants when they were uncomfortable sharing their views. Participants were debriefed after the interviews.

3.7.6. Dissemination of findings

Shah and Sheppard (2022:1) define dissemination as “a planned process of communicating, sharing, or translating research findings to maximise their benefits to targeted audiences”. With this study, once the research project was completed, the researcher submitted the findings in the form of a research report to the University of Pretoria. The research findings may be submitted to a scientific journal for publication and possibly be used for conference papers. The information was also included in the informed consent completed by participants.

3.8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Participants seemed unaware of the five phases of the FREC programme, and some had to estimate the number of modules completed; therefore, there was a possibility of participants not having met the criteria of having completed phase 2, which is module 6. The data collected may have been compromised if participants lacked sufficient engagement in the FREC programme to recognise its contributions. However, this did not occur as participants demonstrated knowledge gained from phase 3 of the programme. The researcher observed that while all the participants were proficient in English, they occasionally encountered difficulties in accurately expressing themselves due to the language not being their native tongue. The researcher, however, tried to counter this by probing more to enable them to better express themselves.

Despite having realised throughout the interviews that participants had a limited understanding of what sustainable livelihoods meant, the researcher did not ask participants about their understanding of the concept. The researcher was concerned that explaining the concept to participants could be challenging and more confusing to them. Posing this question to participants could have significantly enriched the data. Nonetheless, the researcher elaborated on some questions for better understanding, hence the data collected was not affected.

3.9. SUMMARY

The chapter outlined the appropriateness of the qualitative approach and applied research for the study. The research methodology for the study was detailed, including the sampling of participants, the one-on-one interviews with semi-structured questions for data collection, and the thematic analysis to be used for data analysis. The researcher conducted a pilot study of two participants, who were also included in the main study. The ethical considerations were presented, which were to be considered for the duration of the study. Finally, the researcher presented the limitations of the study, explaining how they were addressed and whether they affected the findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this chapter is to present, analyse, and interpret the research findings of this study. The empirical study was guided by the following research question:

- How does the FREC programme contribute to mitigating poverty from the early exit and currently enrolled participants' perspective?

The following sub-questions informed the main research question:

- What are the reasons for participants to join the FREC Programme?
- How does the FREC Programme align with the needs of the participants for sustainable livelihood outcomes?
- How have participants' social and economic well-being changed since joining the FREC programme?
- What strategies are recommended to contribute to sustainable livelihood outcomes?

The chapter will therefore discuss the findings as guided by the research question and sub-questions. The researcher explored the experiences of both participants who dropped out (early exit participants) of the FREC programme and those who are currently still enrolled in the programme.

4.2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The empirical findings of the study are presented and discussed in two sections. The first section presents the biographical information of the participants, while the second section discusses the themes that emerged from the data.

4.2.1. Biographic profile of participants

The researcher presents the biographic information of the five (5) participants who dropped out of the programme before completion and the five (5) participants who were still enrolled in the FREC programme at the time of the study. The biographical profiles of both categories of participants include their age, gender, educational level, marital status,

number of people in their households, number of people contributing to the household income, the period in the programme, and how far they have progressed with the five phases in the programme. For the participants who exited the programme early, the table also includes the number of months they were enrolled. To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used. Early exit participants were abbreviated to EEP plus a numeric number from 1 to 5. Currently enrolled participants at the time of the study are referred to as CEP1 to 5.

4.2.1.1. FREC participants

The findings on the biographical information of the FREC participants are summarised in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Biographic information of FREC participants

	Early Exit Participants					Currently Enrolled Participants				
	EEP1	**EEP2**	**EEP3**	**EEP4**	**EEP5**	**CEP 1**	**CEP2**	**CEP3**	**CEP4**	**CEP5**
Age	25-31	32-38	25-31	32-38	18-24	25-31	18-24	18-24	18-24	25-31
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Other	Male	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male
Marital status	Single	Single	Single	Single	Single	Living with partner	Single	Single	Single	Single
Programme phase reached	3	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	5	5
Programme enrolment (Month + Year)	Feb 2022	Jun 2021	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	Mar 2022	Sep 2022	Apr 2022	Aug 2022	Apr 2022
Departure from programme (Month + Year)	Jul 2022	Oct 2022	Jun 2022	Jun 2022	Jul 2022	-	-	-	-	-
Education level	Diploma	Certificate	Certificate	Diploma	Grade 12	Certificate	Grade 12	Grade 12	Grade 12	Certificate
Household size	4-6	7-9	4-6	4-6	7-9	1-3	10+	7-9	4-6	4-6
Household financial contributors	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2

- **Age**

The participants in the study, both those who exited early and those currently enrolled, were predominantly young. The study included 10 participants, of whom 4 were between the ages of 18 and 24, 1 of whom was an early exit participant and 3 of whom had current enrolments. Another 4 were between the ages 25 and 31, two each in the early exit and currently enrolled categories. The other 2 participants were between the ages of 32 and 38, both early exit participants. None of the participants were above the age of 38. The age range considered young in South Africa is 18–35, and 9 out of 10 participants fell into this category. Considering the high youth unemployment rate in South Africa, which is currently 45.5% (STATS SA, 2024), it is no surprise that young people would enrol in the FREC programme that trains and incubates entrepreneurs in the hope of creating their jobs.

- **Gender**

The FREC participants who participated in the study were predominantly male. Males comprised 7 of the 10 participants, 3 of whom were classified as early exit participants, and 4 of whom were presently enrolled. There were 2 female participants, one from the early exit group and the other from the currently enrolled group. A participant category labelled "other" was made up of 1 participant who was allowed to exit early. The male-dominated profile was expected by the researcher, as Meyer, Samsami and Bowmaker-Falconer (2024:27) state that entrepreneurship is a male-dominated environment in South Africa, although there is an improvement in women's participation. Figure 4.1. below depicts a visual presentation of how the two participant groups compared with one another.

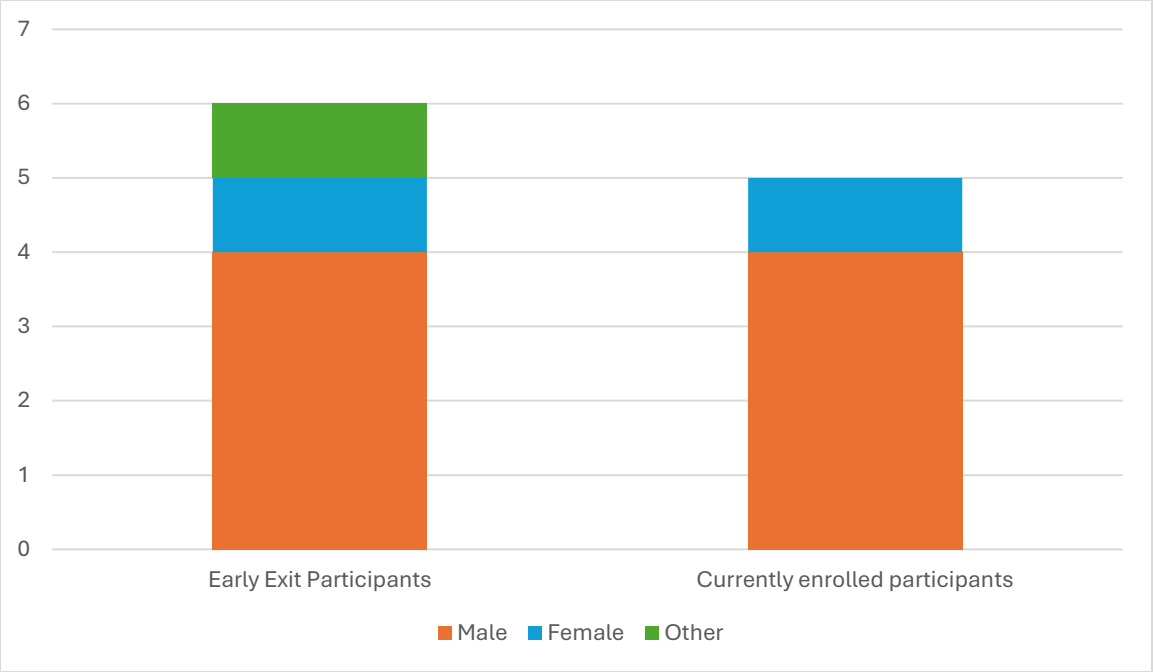

Figure 4.1: Distribution of FREC participants by gender

- **Educational level**

The educational level of all FREC participants affirmed that the minimal requirement of admission into the FREC programme was met, which was the completion of grade 12. A total of six participants exceeded the admission criteria. The greatest level of education for 4 of the 10 FREC participants was grade 12. Another 4 had certificates, two each in the early exit and currently enrolled participant groups. The other 3 participants were currently enrolled, while one was in the early exit cohort. The 2 participants who had acquired diplomas were both early exit participants. Figure 4.2 below illustrates a comparison of the early exit and currently enrolled participants' level of education.

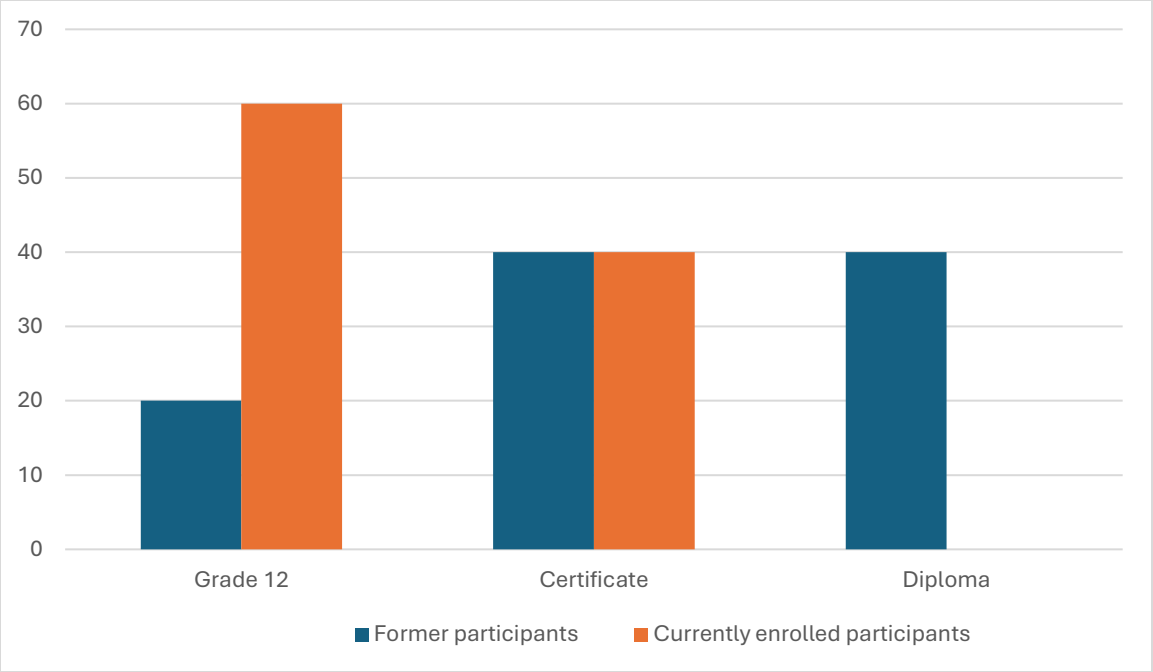

Figure 4.2: Comparison of early exit and current participants' educational level

The early exit participants were more qualified than the presently enrolled participants, as seen in Figure 4.2. The minimum grade 12 criteria were exceeded by only two of the currently enrolled participants, who each held a certificate as their highest qualification.

- **Marital status**

The study included 10 FREC participants, 9 of whom were single, and only 1 of whom is currently enrolled and living with a partner. The marital status correlates with the younger age profile of the participants.

- **Number of people in the household**

The findings indicate high numbers of people living in participants' households. The residences of 5 of the 10 participants consisted of 4 to 6 individuals: 3 in the early departure participants group and 2 in the currently enrolled participants group. All 3 participants had seven to nine individuals in their households, with two of them being early exit participants and 1 being a currently enrolled participant. In the households of 1 currently enrolled participant, there were over 10 individuals, while the other had 1 to 3 individuals. The average number of people in the participants' households was 5 to 7

people. The findings imply that with more people living in each household, there is a greater need for income to sustain the family members. The household numbers reflect their financial constraints when compared with the number of people contributing to the respective households' income.

- **Number of people contributing to household income**

The household income of 3 of the 10 FREC members was contributed by 3 individuals. The early exit participants were 2 of the 3 participants with 3 financial contributors to the households, contributing to households of 7 to 9 and 4 to 6, respectively. There are 3 financial contributors to a household of 7 to 9 individuals of 1 participant is currently enrolled.

The revenue was supplied by just 2 individuals per family for 7 participants. Each participant group consisted of 2 participants, each with 2 financial donors supporting homes of 4 to 6 persons. An early exit participant had two financial contributions within a family of 7 to 9 individuals. The remaining 2 participants in the currently enrolled category respectively contributed financially to a household of 1 to 3 members, while the other supported a household of more than 10 members. When considering the number of people contributing to the household income, they are less than half the total number of members in each household, except for one. The higher the number of people depending on a single financial contributor, the more vulnerable the household becomes to shocks such as poverty and high levels of unemployment, as identified in the SLF (DFID, 1999). The correlation between the number of households and the financial contributors to the respective households per participant group is visually reflected in Figure 4.3.

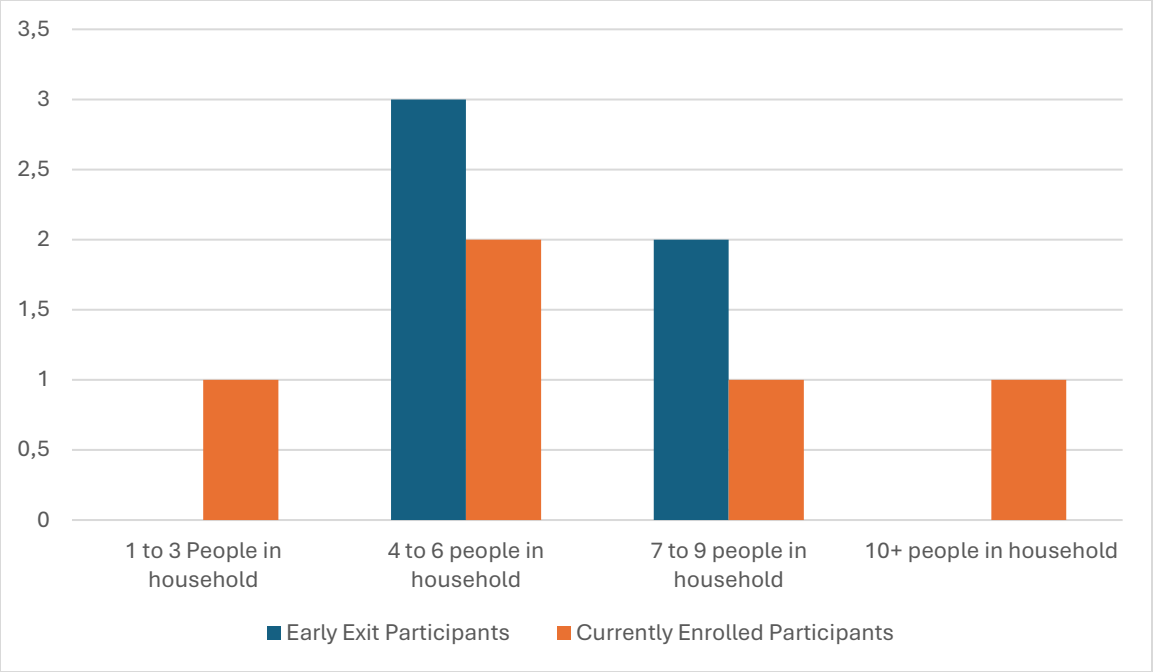

Figure 4.3: The correlation between households and financial contributions per participant group

- **Programme phase reached**

All the early exit participants left the FREC programme at different times; however, all 5 left while in progress with phase 3. Among the 5 early exit participants, 1 engaged in the programme for 5 months, 2 for 4 months, and the remaining 2 for 3 months. The participants were uncertain of their exact dates of enrolment and departure; therefore, they estimated their time in the programme, which explains why the early exit participants were at the same phase before their departure, despite spending different amounts of time in the programme. Another contributing factor is the different activities within each phase; the early exit participants may have been at different activities within the same phase. The 5 currently enrolled participants, on the contrary, were all in phase 5 of the programme, which is the last phase. The period spent by the early exit participants in the programme demonstrates the minimal time the FREC programme could make a sustainable impact on the livelihoods.

4.2.2. Themes and sub-themes

The themes that emerged from the data from the early exit and currently enrolled participants revealed similarities. Therefore, the developed themes and sub-themes will be discussed in an integrated manner. However, the researcher will distinguish between the voices of early exit participants and those currently enrolled, highlighting specific themes and sub-themes relevant to each group. The participants' voices will be emphasised in the findings through direct quotes, and the study's findings will be verified by relevant literature. The themes and subthemes of the study are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Summary of themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Motivation for participants to join the FREC programme	1.1. To enhance microbusiness knowledge 1.2. To receive funding for microbusiness
2. Expectations of participants from the FREC programme	2.1. Improving business knowledge to meet basic needs 2.2. A source of income to address unemployment
3. Effect of the FREC programme on participants' overall wellbeing	3.1. Improvement in social wellbeing 3.2. Improvement in economic wellbeing 3.3. Improvement in psychological wellbeing
4. Suggested changes to improve the FREC programme	4.1. Early funding in partnership with external businesses 4.2. Improved professional conduct of facilitators 4.3. Networking opportunities to showcase participants' microbusinesses

Theme 1: Motivation for participants to join the FREC programme

Participants indicated two main reasons that motivated them to join the FREC programme: to enhance their microbusiness knowledge and to receive funding for their microbusinesses. These reasons will next be discussed as sub-themes.

Sub-theme 1.1: To enhance microbusiness knowledge

Participants' primary motivation for enrolling in the FREC programme was to expand their understanding of microbusinesses, as eight of the ten participants themselves owned one. Four participants were early exit participants, while four were presently enrolled. They explained that although they already owned microbusinesses, gaining further insight was essential for improving them. Findings indicate that, although most participants had a business for a while, they had never learnt how to run a business and wanted to fill this knowledge gap, including learning entrepreneurial skills. The quest to improve microbusiness knowledge is captured in the following remarks of three participants:

EEP4: *"Uhm okay, so like when I heard what the programme does, I was interested to learn about business and see where I can improve my entrepreneurial skills…"*

CEP5: *"So for me right? I have had my business for a long time now but like I don't see progress…so I thought that maybe, if I join this programme, I will get information that can make my business better you see? Cause like I have never learnt about business like…theory, I just started because I love it."*

EEP 1: *"…my expectation at first theoretically is to get more insightful knowledge or basics about mmm…the business side of things."*

The findings indicate that participants understand the importance of acquiring business and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills to manage microbusinesses effectively. Addae-Korankye (2014:149) links entrepreneurial skills to poverty, stating that such skills are key factors that could alleviate poverty. Similarly, David and Hamburg (2017:14) emphasise the importance of acquiring entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, stating that it better

prepares individuals for the labour market. Similarly, the SLF recognises the importance of education and skills as essential components of human capital, which serves as an asset for sustainable livelihoods (Krantz, 2001:7). Affirming the finding on motivations for entrepreneurship, Bhatt (2016:29) adds another dimension by stating that entrepreneurs are motivated by both psychological and economic rewards. Cecchini (2020:11) supports the finding that closing knowledge gaps is crucial for improving a business, asserting that when a company is stagnant, identifying these gaps could help to improve the business.

Sub-theme 1.2: To receive funding for microbusiness

Many participants were incentivised to enrol in the FREC programme owing to the prospective financing contingent upon their advancement within the programme. They indicated that they were encouraged by others who were in the FREC programme to join the programme due to the financial support available for entrepreneurs. The following quote from one participant captures the participants' view:

> EEP 2: *"…yes so ja when I heard that they help with businesses, like giving them money, I thought that they could maybe help me with funding for my clothing business."*

Participants believe that the availability of funding distinguishes the FREC programme from others. They regarded it as an opportunity to access external financial support, not only for starting a new business, however, also for expanding an existing one. A currently enrolled participant agreed with this point of view:

> CEP 4: *"…uhm because I thought that It would help me and my business especially in terms of finances…financial start-up and backing because I think of, I think, ja it's not many opportunities like this that you get to expand your business without having to get money from your own pocket."*

In addition to the monetary funding that motivated participants to join the programme, they expressed how they were also encouraged by the assistance given by the FREC programme in the form of resources. Participants explained that some of their microbusinesses require machinery that they cannot afford and that the FREC

programme can purchase these on their behalf, subject to certain conditions. Participants expressed their sentiments on the provision of resources as follows:

> EEP 1: *"Like we are in short of machinery whatsoever, whatsoever, ja."*
>
> EEP 2: *"Okay so I was hoping to like uhm…get assistance with funding so that maybe I can have my own machinery to print for myself you see?"*

The findings in this sub-theme confirm Bhatt's (2016:25) observation that entrepreneurs are differentiated by pull and push factors. The pull factor for these participants is the financial gain, as this motivates them to join the programme. Participants' need for funding to improve their businesses is supported by Becker (2019:3), who states that small businesses require access to capital and additional resources to start, continue, or expand. A study by Al Mamun, Fazal and Zainol (2019:423) found that microbusinesses are disadvantaged by limited access to funding, as participants reported that these shortages hindered their progress. The potential financial support that motivated participants to join the FREC programme affirms that community and social networks and affiliations can secure funding for entrepreneurs (Meyer et al., 2024:27). The SLF identifies financial capital as an asset that can enhance opportunities for livelihoods (DFID, 1999), hence aligning with participants' need for funding to mitigate poverty.

Theme 2: Expectations of participants from the FREC programme

Participants shared their hopes as they engaged in the FREC programme. For some participants, their expectancies from the programme formed part of the reason for enrolling in the programme. Participants, both presently enrolled and those who left early, believed that the FREC programme satisfied their own and their families' fundamental needs and as a source of income to combat unemployment. These findings will be discussed further as sub-themes below.

Sub-theme 2.1: Improving business knowledge to meet basic needs

Participants indicated that they expected acquiring business knowledge would enable them to better meet their basic needs. They explained that by implementing business knowledge, their businesses would improve, which in turn would increase profits and

enable them to meet their and their families' basic needs. One early exit participant expressed this view in the following quote:

> EEP 5: *"When I apply the knowledge I gained from FREC and I give my business time, maybe I will be able to meet my basic needs, and also help my family."*

Participants included food in fulfilling their fundamental needs. The following quotes represent participants' expectations for food security as a basic need for themselves and their families:

> EEP 5: *"Well uhm…I was expecting to learn more about business cause like, yes, I did business studies at school, but I needed more detail and practical information so that I can improve my business, and at least like afford basics, like food."*

> CEP 5: *"You know neh as a man, you must provide even if like you contribute R200 or R300 to buy groceries, it's something…ja so, I expected to get that knowledge that can improve my profits and at least buy enough food in the house."*

Participants aspired to alter their lifestyles and attain homeownership. Although not currently homeless, they aspired to own their own homes rather than continue living with their parents. The following quotation from a currently enrolled participant expresses this sentiment:

> CEP 4: *"FREC will just contribute more to it and even maybe change our lifestyles altogether to maybe get our own homes."*

The finding suggests that the FREC programme could help meet participants' and their families' needs for food, contributing to more sustainable living. DFID (1999) affirms that participants' expectations are justified, stating that improving food security is key to achieving sustainable livelihood outcomes. Hines, Steimle and Ryan (2024:810) identify food insecurity as a source of stress and strain related to poverty, making it reasonable for participants to have this expectation as a means of mitigating poverty. Tandi and

Mawere (2018:123) agree that poverty alleviation requires an increase in food security for households.

Taylor (2019:142) observes that possessing one's own home as opposed to being homeless may appear to be a luxury; however, it is crucial to consider individuals' subjective experiences of poverty when assessing multidimensional poverty. The SLF regards shelter as an essential asset for sustainable livelihoods (DFID, 1999). Therefore, it is acceptable for participants to expect to have their own homes. The findings also indicate that participants anticipated that through the FREC programme, the basic needs of their families would be met. The expectation stated above aligns with the 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, and the NDP, which stipulates that providing basic life necessities is a key strategy for eradicating poverty in the future (AU, 2015:14; UN, 2015:10; RSA, 2012:28).

Sub-theme 2.2: A source of income to address unemployment

Most participants said that upon attending the FREC programme, they anticipated acquiring a source of income due to their jobless status. As stated earlier in the biographical findings, the unemployment rate in South Africa is high, so it is no surprise that participants hoped to address unemployment through the FREC programme. The following excerpts capture participants' need for a source of income to address unemployment:

> CEP 3: *"Well firstly, you know how bad unemployment is now in South Africa…so then I thought that maybe instead of waiting for employment, I can make my own income by owning my own business and being the boss (laughs)."*

> EEP 4: *"Ja, instead of waiting for a job because these days eish, it's hard to find a job. So why not make your own money?"*

Participants in their pursuit of income realised that they could not depend on the government to create employment opportunities. The finding is reflected in the following citation from one of the currently enrolled participants:

> CEP 1: *"Surely as a country we won't…we won't rely on the government."*

Participants believed that by engaging in the FREC programme, they could be empowered to expand their businesses, allowing their successes to create opportunities and jobs for others. The following quotes from currently enrolled participants highlight that, in their efforts to combat unemployment, they are not only looking out for themselves, however, also for others:

> CEP 4: *"…and also, we can contribute to fighting unemployment for other people who are not in business but are looking for work our business can contribute to their lifestyles, so ja."*
>
> CEP 1: *"…the aim of starting business is not fill yourself but also to create jobs and opportunities you know"*

The findings highlight the severity of unemployment in South Africa, as STATS SA (2024) reports a high unemployment rate. These findings also align with the perspective of the NDP (RSA, 2012:23), which states that unemployment is a critical issue that needs to be addressed to mitigate poverty. Davie (2015:1) and Addae-Korankye (2014:150) support the participants' view of pursuing their income due to unemployment, arguing that poverty results in the economic exclusion of people who are unable to participate in the labour market and therefore experiencing long-term unemployment.

The SLF recognises having an income as a key outcome of sustainable livelihoods (DFID, 1999), thus affirming participants' need for their income as important. The findings further highlight that participants realised that they could not depend on the government to create jobs, and instead had to seek assistance from other entities. Davie (2015:3) supports the above by stating that collective action is essential to mitigate poverty. The findings also indicate that participants believed that their businesses could assist in countering unemployment by creating jobs. Mamman et al. (2015:4) corroborate these findings, stating that SMMEs play a significant role in job creation within the private sector. Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:111) concur, noting that in Africa, entrepreneurship plays a key role in addressing the income gap.

Theme 3: Effect of the FREC programme on participants' overall wellbeing

Participants' views on the changes they experienced because of their engagement in the FREC programme are embedded in this theme. They further explained that the changes they experienced were not major in the short term; however, they believed that in the long term, the change could be more significant. The key areas in which participants experienced improvements were their social, economic, and psychological well-being. An overlap between the social and economic improvements was evident, and this will be highlighted in the following discussion of the sub-themes.

Sub-theme 3.1: Improvement in social wellbeing

Participants shared that they experienced various changes in their social well-being since joining the FREC programme. They explained that the new business insights gained through the programme brought about changes in their microbusinesses, which in turn resulted in increased profits. With these increased profits, participants were able to further their knowledge by enrolling in external courses. The following extract reflects the educational change experienced by a currently enrolled participant:

> CEP 3: *"Uhm…currently I am busy with a short course. My sister is helping me pay but I also pay a bit with money from uhm…my business you know?"*

Participants did not only see improvements in their livelihoods, however, also in those of their family members. The following quote from an early exit participant highlights how they could afford education for the child.

> EEP 4: *"Yes, because like I was able to now take my child to creche, like it's not an expensive creche but at least you know?"*

A currently enrolled participant explained how access to transportation improved her social well-being. The following quotation captures the improvement experienced by the participant:

> CEP 3: *"…transport to come here is expensive for someone who is not working you see, cause like eeh…sometimes I used to walk from Nellmapius to come here but at least now, my business is doing better…yes, I have taxi*

money."

The findings reveal that, although participants require the financial assistance of family members, they are now able to pay for their further education because of increased business profit due to their engagement with the FREC programme. These findings resonate with the SLF, which emphasises that sustainable poverty reduction can only be attained through support that is outside of the individual's household (DFID, 1999). The findings also demonstrate that participants were able to afford early childhood development education, which aligns with the objectives of the NDP (RSA, 2012:70), Agenda 2063 (AU, 2015:3), and the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015:7), all which stress that access to early childhood development is imperative for sustained investment.

The findings demonstrate that, previously, participants were unable to access public transport due to financial constraints. Their engagement with the FREC programme helped improve their business success, thus enabling them to afford the taxi fare. The SLF justifies participants' need for transport as it states that access to affordable transport is compulsory for sustainable livelihoods (DFID; 1999 & RSA, 2021:41). The findings confirm that participants experienced improvements in their social well-being because of the FREC programme's positive impact on their business profits. The findings support the assertion by David and Hamburg (2017:14) that advancing entrepreneurial abilities can assist in addressing social challenges.

Sub-theme 3.2: Improvement in economic wellbeing

Most individuals reported experiencing changes in their economic status in several ways. They explained that their participation in the FREC programme taught them different techniques, which led them to see profits and savings in their microbusinesses. Participants reported how the skills training in entrepreneurship received from the FREC programme empowered them. The empowerment served a dual purpose as it improved their economic and social well-being, in that the skills training had an educational component; thus, the overlap as stated above. The following extract from early exit participants highlights the change in microbusiness profits:

EEP4: *"like I already mentioned that the formula to calculate pricing is helping me*

a lot in terms of seeing better profits"

EEP 5: *"…I was applying the things they taught us and I could see some difference in the profit I made."*

Participants not only have increased profits, but they also learnt how to save money in their businesses as they implemented the financial methods learnt from the FREC programme. A currently enrolled participant reflects this view in the following quote:

CEP 2: *"…and also, I am saving because like…uuuh, at FREC they taught us to calculate the cost of each…uhm, unit. So we don't cheat ourselves."*

All the participants recognised the FREC programme as an educational opportunity that enhanced their understanding of microbusiness operations. They explained that although some had previously obtained business education from high school or other training, they noted that the way the modules are structured and taught in the FREC programme established the content as more meaningful. The following excerpts reflect the different areas in which participants were educated:

EEP 1: *"for in case where, they give us a formula and show...showed us like how to calculate cost."*

EEP 2: *"Like I got to learn the importance of respecting my business money and like…not mix it with my personal money you see"*

CEP 4: *"...engaging with people because there's a module that also deals with marketing. FREC also helped with that cause we went step by step into the different modules and ja it really tested our knowledge altogether"*

The findings demonstrate that participants acquired knowledge from the FREC programme on how to calculate pricing, which assisted them in seeing an increase in profits. David and Hamburg (2017:9) understand why participants would note the change in profits as they explain that the traditional drive for entrepreneurship is profit, hence the improvement in profits is noted by participants. The findings reveal that participants were educated on how to calculate the costs of producing their products to avoid making a loss. Mamman et al. (2015:69) agree with these findings stating that entrepreneur training

results in positive influence at the entrepreneur level, such as saving on business costs. The SLF adds that, amongst other areas, understanding cash costs of production can assist in analysing livelihoods (DFID, 1999).

The findings further show how participants improved their entrepreneurial skills training. Participants acquired practical business knowledge, particularly in financial management, budgeting, and marketing. The education provided by the FREC programme proves to create a beneficial environment for participants, as described by Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:111), stating that entrepreneurial ecosystems ensure productive entrepreneurship that eventually stimulates economic growth and people's welfare is improved. The value of financial management gained by participants is recognised by Mwirigi et al. (2019) in Maduku and Kaseeram (2021:677), stating that entrepreneurs ought to have this skill to survive.

Sub-theme 3.3: Improvement in psychological wellbeing

Participants believed that their involvement in the FREC programme improved their psychological well-being. Participants shared how they experienced a change in their emotional and mental state of being. They reported that they felt proud of what they could achieve because of their engagement in the FREC programme. Others found encouragement from the stories of other participants, as they could learn from them. Participants further shared that they felt depressed due to unemployment before joining the FREC programme; however, their interactions in the FREC programme kept their minds from idling. The following excerpts from early exit participants represent the sense of enhanced emotional well-being:

> EEP 4: *"Yes, and I feel proud that I can do that [pay for creche fees] for my child now."*
>
> EEP 1: *"So, so if you hear the stories of others like, that encouragement and inter… interaction we had, we learnt a lot from each other"*

Participants expressed how hardships such as unemployment challenged their mental well-being as it made them feel depressed, while for others their mental well-being was

preserved through the FREC programme; it kept them busy, and they found it interesting. The following extracts by both early exit and currently enrolled echo this view:

> EEP 3: "*jaaa…because I was like starting to feel depressed because of not getting a job and just sitting at home. So, when I kept my mind busy and I found the programme interesting, it was better."*
>
> CEP 3: *"Ja because being unemployed can be very difficult, so when you keep busy by being part of such a programme, you won't get depressed."*

The findings on the improvement in the psychological well-being of participants brought about by the FREC programme align with Patel (2015:237) stating that engaging in economic empowerment programmes is one of the activities that assist individuals in attending to their psychological well-being. The contribution of the FREC programme to participants' psychological well-being correlates with the vision of the 2030 Agenda, which aims to have a world where people's psychological well-being is assured (UN, 2015:7). The findings on participants experiencing depression due to unemployment are verified by Alvaro et al. (2019) in Wani and Ahmed (2024:2), stating that unemployment harms the mental health of individuals, which leads to issues such as stress and depression.

Theme 4: Suggested changes to improve the FREC programme

The theme captures participants' suggestions for improving the FREC programme. While many participants had experienced some positive changes since their involvement, they also identified areas of enhancement. Their suggestions emerged into the following sub-themes, which are discussed next: early funding in partnership with external businesses; improved professional conduct of the facilitators; and expanding networking opportunities to showcase participants' microbusinesses.

Sub-theme 4.1: Early funding in partnership with external businesses

Participants joined the FREC initiative primarily to seek money for their micro companies, as emphasised in sub-theme 1.2. Participants believed that receiving funding earlier in the programme would be beneficial, as it would enable them to start their businesses and apply the insights gained from the FREC programme as they learned. Additionally,

participants suggested that the FREC programme could form partnerships to help secure funding for their microbusiness. The following quotes from early exit participants reflect their view on earlier financial support in the programme:

EEP 3: *"Oh okay, uuuhm eish…okay I would say maybe, they can give students a little money in the beginning to start a small business so that they can apply immediately the knowledge they get."*

EEP 2: *"Uhm what I can say is maybe for those who already have businesses running, they can give them some start-up capital as a motivation for them."*

Participants believed that it would be beneficial for the FREC programme to form partnerships with other companies. They believed that such partnerships could provide funding for their microbusinesses and possibly offer mentorship where possible. The following excerpts from currently enrolled participants reflect their views in this regard:

CEP 3: *"Okay uhm…what I can say is uhm…maybe FREC can ask other companies to fund our businesses cause like we are many you know… ja so maybe those companies can even mentor us in business."*

CEP 2: *"Eeh I think they can get more funding from sponsors you know… Ja so that they can give more people money for the business you see? …Ja even if like, eish…they don't give us money, maybe they can get us resources for our business."*

The finding that participants need to obtain funding earlier to start their businesses is validated by Bhatt (2016:42) and Becker (2019:3), who both emphasise that obtaining cashflow early is necessary for the start of a business and its subsequent growth (Bhatt, 2016:42; Becker, 2019:3). The finding that participants require start-up capital aligns with Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:112), who state that finances are a mandatory resource for entrepreneurs at the start-up stage. Mamman et al. (2015:23) note that insufficient financial capital is one of the key reasons entrepreneurial training programmes fail. The findings that participants believe the FREC programme should form partnerships for financial assistance align with Maduku and Kaseeram (2021:679), who argue that

collaborations are essential for the success of small businesses. They recommend collaboration between government, non-government organisations, and the private sector to improve access to financial resources.

Sub-theme 4.2: Improved professional conduct of facilitators

Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the conduct of the facilitators, stating that they needed to conduct themselves more professionally and lead by example. They felt that the facilitators were not treating them fairly and excluded them from decision-making, possibly because they had not paid to attend the programme. The following extract by an early exit participant reflects this view:

> EEP 4: *"Uhm what I would say is that they must practice what they preach. Like be professional, communicate on time, be fair to us because we know we get the programme for free but it doesn't mean we should not be informed and involved in some decisions made. They need to understand that we make sacrifices you know."*

Participants believed that the facilitators' work performance should be regularly monitored. While they believed that the FREC programme already had a system in place to measure performance, they felt facilitators needed to be held accountable for their conduct. The following quotation highlights this view:

> EEP 1: *"I think first of all…they must, they must monitor…they must monitor their…I don't know to say workers cause towards our teachers those who teached us…who taught us…work performance cause uuuh…uuuh, it's already there the system, I know they…they have that system where they check your credit performance indicators and what-what and everybody must be held accountable."*

The findings that participants expect facilitators to conduct themselves professionally are supported by Mamman et al. (2015:69), who emphasise the need for trainers to receive support in improving their personal and professional competencies. The finding on participants' expectation that facilitators should lead by example is reinforced by Scheidgen (2021:66), who states that mentors should recognise the importance of

reciprocating their conduct in the entrepreneurial community. Participants' recommendations that facilitators' performance be evaluated are consistent with Bhatt's (2016:63) assertion that knowledge about employee performance is essential for evaluating job effectiveness.

Sub-theme 4.3: Networking opportunities to showcase participants' microbusinesses

Participants suggested that the FREC programme provides networking opportunities, such as organising markets where participants can display their businesses and connect with others. Participants suggested that they be provided with various platforms to showcase their businesses for marketing purposes. The following excerpt from a currently enrolled participant reflects their view on the importance of networking opportunities:

> CEP 5: *"They can help us to have like markets where we can network and showcase our businesses."*

In addition to requesting networking opportunities, participants stated that such platforms would be beneficial for marketing their microbusinesses. The following quote from a currently enrolled participant emphasises this view:

> CEP 4: *"…or maybe they can help us with platforms to show-off our business…like help us market our businesses"*

The findings regarding participants' proposals for networking opportunities corroborate Becker (2019), who states that providing businesses with access to networking opportunities is a key initiative for fostering growth. David and Hamburg (2017:15) add that entrepreneurs should be empowered to improve their networking skills. The finding that participants seek platforms to market their businesses is supported by Bhatt (2016:57), who mentions that companies gain a competitive advantage when they are exposed to good networks. Masouras (2019:10) further agrees, stating that networking benefits businesses by enabling entrepreneurs to form valuable partnerships.

4.3 SUMMARY

The researcher outlined the biographical profiles of the five early exit participants and the five currently enrolled participants from the FREC programme who participated in the study in this chapter. Four themes that emerged from the data were discussed: (1) the motivation for participants to join the FREC programme; (2) participants' expectations of the programme; (3) the effect of the FREC programme on participants' overall well-being, and (4) suggested changes to improve the FREC programme. The overall findings from these themes reveal that participants were primarily motivated to join the FREC programme to gain insights into entrepreneurship and microbusiness. However, the majority were motivated by the potential financial support they could receive for their microbusinesses.

Furthermore, high unemployment rates in South Africa prompted participants to explore opportunities to generate their income, which led them to pursue entrepreneurial skills training. While the changes participants experienced were not substantial, the findings suggest improvements in their social, economic, and psychological well-being. Participants also provided suggestions for enhancing the programme, with particular emphasis on increasing funding and networking opportunities, as well as modifying the conduct of the facilitators. These key findings will be further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The research study is concluded in this chapter. The chapter begins by evaluating the attainment of the research goal and objectives. The next section presents the key findings of the study, from which conclusions will be drawn. Finally, recommendations based on these findings will be established, including areas for future research.

5.2. RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the study was to explore the FREC programme's contribution to mitigating poverty from the early exit and currently enrolled participants' perspectives. The goal of the study was attained through the following objectives:

Objective 1:

- To contextualise the FREC programme within the Sustainable Livelihood Framework.

The objective was achieved from a literature perspective in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.6), where the FREC programme was contextualised within the various components of the sustainable livelihood framework. As indicated in sub-section 2.6.1, the FREC participants face the challenges of poverty and high unemployment. Natarajan et al. (2022:11) emphasise the importance of recognising these issues, as the causes and solutions to vulnerability are central to the vulnerability context. Levie (2014:4) argues that one of the key questions to consider concerning livelihood strategies is "What are people doing to make a living?". As such, the FREC programme was identified as a livelihood strategy that assists participants in establishing their businesses to make a living (see sub-section 2.6.3). Additionally, the FREC programme was recognised as a transforming structure, serving as a bridge for participants to access financial, human, and social capital (see sub-section 2.6.5).

Objective 2:

- To determine the reasons for participants joining the FREC programme.

The objective was attained in Chapter 4, where both early exit, and currently enrolled participants stated their reasons for joining the FREC programme. Participants joined the programme to improve their entrepreneurial insights and skills (see sub-theme 1.1), which Addae-Korankye (2014:149) identifies as fundamental skills that could alleviate poverty. Another reason stated by participants for joining the FREC programme was to obtain funding for their microbusinesses (see sub-theme 1.2). The differentiation in the reasons for participants joining the FREC programme correlates with what was stated by Bhatt (2016:25) that entrepreneurs have various pull and push factors to entrepreneurship.

Objective 3:

- To explore the alignment between the goals of the FREC Programme and the needs of the participants for sustainable livelihood outcomes.

The goal of the FREC programme as outlined in Chapter 2 (see sub-section 2.3), namely, to mentor entrepreneurs through its five-phase programme and incubate microbusinesses (Learmonth, 2022), was achieved. The objective was also achieved in Chapter 4 (see theme 2), where participants expressed their needs by stating their expectations from the FREC programme. Participants expressed the need to enhance their business knowledge (see sub-theme 2.1), a need that aligns with the FREC programme's goals of mentoring entrepreneurs. Furthermore, participants indicated a desire to improve their business insights to meet basic needs, such as food security. The DFID (1999) affirms that the need for food security is important for realising sustainable livelihood outcomes. Participants also expressed a need for a source of income to address unemployment (see sub-theme 2.2). However, this need does not directly align with the FREC programme’s goals, as its focus is not explicitly aimed at tackling unemployment.

Despite this misalignment, it was evident that while both early exit and currently enrolled participants sought to address unemployment for themselves as individuals, only the currently enrolled participants aspired to address unemployment on a broader scale by

creating opportunities through their microbusinesses. There was, however, an alignment with participants' need for a source of income, as the FREC programme incubates microbusinesses to ensure they are self-sustainable. The finding can be interpreted as emphasising the importance of employment. The DFID (1999) corroborated these findings, identifying income as a key factor for sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Objective 4:

- To explore what has changed in participants' social and economic well-being since joining the FREC programme.

The objective was achieved, as reflected in the empirical findings in Chapter 4, particularly in the discussion of the change participants experienced in their overall well-being (see Theme 3). Although the social and economic changes participants experienced were not drastic, they believed that the FREC programme had the potential to bring about lasting change (see sub-themes 3.1 and 3.2). The findings showed that there was an overlap in the social and economic changes participants experienced. The profits participants earned enabled them to meet their social needs, while the entrepreneurial skills they developed not only supported their economic well-being, however also had educational benefits that contributed to their social well-being. Participants learnt business skills such as pricing, saving, and financial management, which resulted in increased profits for their microbusinesses. The improvement in profit is noteworthy, as it reflects the traditional drive behind entrepreneurship (David & Hamburg, 2017:9). The findings also reveal that participants gained valuable insights into financial management, budgeting, and marketing through the FREC programme. The findings corroborate Mukiza and Kansheba's (2020:111) assertion that entrepreneurial systems foster economic growth, which, in turn, enhances people's well-being.

Participants experienced changes in their social well-being, particularly in their ability to further their education and afford early childhood development education for their children (see sub-theme 3.1). The ability to access early childhood development education aligns with the views of several authors who emphasise its importance (RSA, 2012:70; AU, 2015:3; & UN, 2015:7). Participants reported another change in their social well-being as the ability to access public transport because of engaging with the FREC programme (see

sub-theme 3.1). The ability to access affordable transport resonates with Serrat's (2017:23) assertion that it is essential for sustainable livelihoods.

Objective 5:

- To recommend strategies to contribute to sustainable livelihood outcomes.

The objective was achieved through recommendations presented in this chapter (see sub-section 5.4). These recommendations were informed by the findings and suggestions established by participants in Chapter 4 (see Theme 4), aimed at improving the FREC programme to ensure sustainable livelihood outcomes.

5.3. KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The key findings of the study will be discussed in this section. Each finding will be followed by a conclusion specific to that finding.

- The findings reveal that participants are motivated to join the FREC programme because they recognise the need to expand their business knowledge and acquire entrepreneurial skills. Although most participants own microbusinesses and have some basic business knowledge, they feel this knowledge is insufficient. Participants also reported stagnation in their business growth and believed that gaining further knowledge in business and entrepreneurship would improve their business performance. Some participants acknowledged that they had never received formal business training and had started their businesses out of passion.
    - It can be concluded that the FREC programme is perceived by participants as a valuable resource for acquiring the business knowledge and entrepreneurial skills they feel they lack. Participants believe that the training provided by the programme will lead to positive changes and improvements in the performance of their micro businesses.
- Participants were attracted to the FREC programme largely due to the financial assistance that they could potentially receive. Some participants had been informed before joining that the programme offers resources such as machinery. As a result, participants were motivated to join the FREC programme with the expectation of receiving financial support to enhance their businesses. Participants

noted that the provision of resources distinguishes the FREC programme from similar programmes.

- It can be concluded that participants may not necessarily have been interested in the core aspects of the FREC programme, such as mentoring entrepreneurs and incubating microbusinesses. Instead, they were attracted to the programme by the financial support and resources it offers to help enhance their businesses.

- The findings show that participants' expectations for enrolling in the FREC programme were closely aligned with their reasons for joining the programme. Their primary motivation for acquiring business knowledge was to increase profits in their microbusinesses, enabling them to meet basic needs. Participants anticipated applying the knowledge obtained from the FREC programme to improve their livelihoods, with security being the most pressing need among their household basic needs, of which security was the main need. Additionally, participants acknowledged the high unemployment rate in South Africa and saw the programme as an opportunity to gain insights that would allow them to start their businesses and generate income.
    - In conclusion, participants were primarily driven to join the FREC programme by the need to improve their microbusinesses and secure a better livelihood, rather than an inherent interest in entrepreneurship or microbusiness development. While their unemployment situation influenced their decision to join the programme, their main goal was to acquire knowledge that assisted them in generating income and meeting basic needs. They are thus most likely to leave the programme if an employment opportunity arises.
- The findings indicate that participants experienced improvements in their social, economic and psychological well-being because of their engagement in the FREC programme. However, they noted that these improvements, while positive, were not yet transformative. Participants believed that, with more time to apply the knowledge gained and access to further funding, the changes could become more significant.

Through the FREC programme, participants acquired entrepreneurial skills that strengthened their economic well-being and enhanced their human capital. They implemented the insights gained from the FREC programme in their businesses, leading to increased profits. These profits enabled them to improve their social well-being as they could afford services, such as education and transportation.

Participants also reported improvements in their psychological well-being. Some have previously felt depressed due to unemployment; however, their involvement in the FREC programme allowed them to focus on more constructive thoughts. As a result, their achievements, driven by the contributions of the FREC programme, instilled a sense of pride, which also had a positive effect on their psychological well-being.

  - In conclusion, the FREC programme contributes to the mitigation of poverty by improving participants' social, economic, and psychological well-being, though the changes observed so far have been moderate. The entrepreneurial skills and insights gained from the FREC programme empowered participants economically, leading to increased profits and improved access to services like education and transportation. Furthermore, the programme helped alleviate feelings of depression related to unemployment, which in turn promoted more constructive thoughts and a sense of pride. If participants could have more time to apply what they have learnt and receive additional support, these improvements could likely be on a larger scale.

- The findings demonstrate that participants believe that the FREC programme could be improved in several ways. Those without microbusinesses suggested that it would be helpful to receive funding earlier as it would enable them to start their businesses sooner and apply the knowledge they gained from the programme more immediately. Additionally, participants proposed that forming partnerships with other companies could allow the FREC programme to provide funding to more participants and possibly receive mentorship from those companies. Another suggestion from participants was the need for networking opportunities to help market their microbusinesses. Many expressed a desire for platforms, such as

markets, where they could showcase and promote their businesses to a wider audience. They believed that these opportunities would enhance their chances of success and growth.

- In conclusion, participants believe the FREC programme does not offer enough chances for networking and marketing, even if it offers useful information and skills. They believe that early funding for new entrepreneurs and the establishment of partnerships with other companies could significantly improve the programme's impact. Participants emphasised that having opportunities to market their microbusinesses would help them apply what they have learnt and potentially increase their chances of success.

- The findings reveal that early exit participants expressed concerns regarding the lack of professional conduct from some of the FREC programme facilitators. They were of the view that certain facilitators treated them unfairly and demonstrated poor communication. Participants also believed that facilitators had expectations of them, however they were not living up to these expectations. Some participants felt undermined because they were attending the programme for free and expected to be more involved in decision-making processes. While participants acknowledged that the FREC programme had a system to hold facilitators accountable, they felt this system was not being implemented effectively. They emphasised that facilitators needed to be monitored to ensure that they conducted themselves professionally.

  - It can be concluded that the lack of facilitator supervision appears to contribute to unprofessional behaviour, which results in participants feeling mistreated. Lack of supervision and unprofessional behaviour could be a contributing factor to the early exit participants leaving the programme before completion. Participants believe that the FREC programme would benefit from better monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure that facilitators uphold professional standards.

5.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and conclusions indicate that the FREC programme has the potential to be an active livelihood strategy for mitigating poverty, as participants have experienced some positive changes through their engagement in the FREC programme. Based on the empirical study and the conclusions drawn, the researcher presents the following strategic recommendations for the FREC programme to maximise its contribution toward mitigating poverty for sustainable livelihood outcomes.

5.4.1. FREC's collaboration with businesses for funding and mentorship of participants

The findings emphasise that most participants join the FREC programme due to the anticipated funding for their microbusinesses. However, participants feel that the programme cannot solely fund all their microbusinesses due to the large number of applicants, and thus additional assistance is required. It is therefore recommended that the FREC programme consider partnering with established businesses that can provide funding to participants' microbusinesses. As Mukiza and Kansheba (2020:112) note, finances are a critical resource in the early stages of entrepreneurship.

The FREC programme could approach companies with businesses like those of the participants, allowing these companies to contribute through funding and mentorship as part of their corporate social responsibility. When the FREC programme collaborates with these companies, they will become transforming structures, as outlined by the SLF (DFID, 1999). This collaboration will be instrumental in providing participants with access to both financial and human capital, which are key assets for sustainable livelihoods. When participants' microbusinesses receive funding, they are likely to experience greater business growth, leading to significant improvement in both their social and economic well-being.

5.4.2. Networking and marketing opportunities for FREC participants' micro businesses

Participants are seeking various initiatives to grow their microbusinesses, with networking and marketing opportunities being key suggestions. It is recommended that FREC link

participants with business seminars and established markets to facilitate networking opportunities. By networking with other businesspeople, participants will be inspired and motivated to enhance their microbusinesses, as Becker (2019) states networking fosters growth. Moreover, the establishment of networking opportunities will foster a more comprehensive programme, broadening social capital and other assets in alignment with the SLF (Serrat, 2017:23). Furthermore, it is recommended that FREC considers organising markets in the areas where participants are based (Mamelodi and Nellmapius) to encourage community support for local businesses. These markets would provide participants with the opportunity to showcase their products and services to the public, enhancing their marketing efforts and potentially generating sales. When participants can profit from these markets, the adverse effects of unemployment and poverty within the vulnerability context of the SLF will be addressed (DFID, 1999).

5.4.3. FREC to monitor facilitators and allow participants to have a voice

FREC should consider monitoring the services rendered by their facilitators to ensure efficiency in their work (Bhatt, 2016:63). The process of monitoring could be achieved by providing evaluation forms to participants for their feedback. FREC could implement a suggestions and compliments box, allowing participants to submit feedback anonymously or choose to identify themselves. These initiatives would provide participants with a platform to express their views and feel heard on matters that directly affect them (Triegaardt, 2019:67). In doing so, participants would feel valued and included, viewing themselves as partners who can positively contribute to the improvement of the programme. Furthermore, these measures could help retain participants and reduce premature exits, as the issue of facilitators' conduct was explicitly raised by early exit participants.

5.4.4. Future Families' engagement with FREC participants for developmental social work application

The findings revealed that participants faced challenges in meeting some of their social needs, with poverty and unemployment leaving them vulnerable, as defined by the SLF (DFID, 1999). Some participants reported how unemployment led to depression, and although it is not within the FREC programme's mandate, they believe the programme

indirectly assists them in overcoming these struggles. It is recommended that Future Families, which is already a partner of the FREC programme, integrate aspects of developmental social work to address some of these challenges. By applying the various themes of developmental social work, the FREC programme can further enhance its efforts to mitigate poverty and improve the livelihoods of participants, in alignment with the professions' commitments Gray et al., 2017:975).

Social workers at Future Families could engage participants in exploring alternative ways to meet their basic needs from a rights-based approach while simultaneously supporting the growth of their microbusinesses. Additionally, the social workers could empower FREC facilitators to understand the importance of participants and the value of giving them a voice. Finally, applying developmental social work in the FREC programme could enable social workers to strengthen social development partnerships, ensuring that adequate interventions are in place to effectively mitigate poverty.

5.4.5. Recommendations for future research

The researcher recommends the following topics for further research:

- Exploring the long-term sustainable livelihood outcomes of participants who have graduated from the programme and whose businesses have been incubated for an extended period. The assessment would involve examining whether the long-term application of the knowledge gained from the programme leads to more significant social and economic improvements, as anticipated by the participants.
- Comparing the long-term success of the microbusinesses between early exit and currently enrolled participants to explore their ability to mitigate poverty and achieve sustainable livelihood outcomes.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (CURRENT PARTICIPANTS)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
CURRENT FREC PARTICIPANTS

Goal of the study: To explore the FREC programme's contribution to mitigating poverty from the participants' perspective.

Section A: Biographical information

1. **Age group**

18-24	25-31	32-38	39-45	46-52	53+

2. **What gender do you identify as?**

Male	Female	Transgender	Other	Prefer not to answer

3. **When did you join the programme?**

Month	Year

4. **Educational level**

Grade 12	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Vocational

5. **How far have you progressed in the FREC programme?**

.....

.....

6. **Marital status**

Single	Separated	Living with partner	Married	Divorced	Widowed

7. **How many people live in your household?**

1-3	4-6	7-9	10+

8. **How many members contribute towards the income in your household?**

None	1	2	3	4+

Section B: The FREC Programme

1. How did you hear about the FREC programme?
2. Why did you decide to join the programme?
3. What were your expectations when you joined the FREC programme?
4. In what way is the programme meeting these expectations?
5. How is the FREC programme assisting you to start or grow a micro-business(es) to become self-sustainable?
6. What knowledge and skills have you learnt from the respective phase(s) of the FREC programme towards earning a sustainable income?
7. What changes have you experienced in your and your family's social and economic well-being since you have joined the programme?
8. How does the FREC programme enable you to obtain a sustainable livelihood to meet your and your family's basic and other needs?
9. Would you recommend the FREC programme to a friend/family? Why do you say so?
10. How do you see your ongoing involvement in the programme in the short and longer term to have a better future for yourself and your family?
11. What suggestions do you have for the FREC programme to better assist participants to start or grow a micro-business to earn a sustainable livelihood?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (FORMER PARTICIPANTS)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
FORMER FREC PARTICIPANTS

Goal of the study: To explore the FREC programme's contribution to mitigating poverty from the participants' perspective.

Section A: Biographical information

1. **Age group**

18-24	25-31	32-38	39-45	46-52	53+

2. **What gender do you identify as?**

Male	Female	Transgender	Other	Prefer not to answer

3. **When did you join the programme?**

Month	Year

4. **When did you leave the programme?**

Month	Year

5. **Educational level**

Grade 12	Certificate	Diploma	Degree	Vocational

6. **How far have you progressed in the FREC programme before you left?**

.....

.....

7. **Marital status**

Single	Separated	Living with partner	Married	Divorced	Widowed

8. **How many people live in your household?**

1-3	4-6	7-9	10+

9. **How many members contribute towards the income in your household?**

None	1	2	3	4+

Section B: The FREC Programme

1. How did you hear about the FREC programme?
2. Why did you decide to join the programme?
3. What were your expectations when you joined the FREC programme?
4. In what way has the programme met these expectations by the time you left the programme?
5. Why have you decided to leave the FREC programme?
6. What changes have you and your family experienced in your social and economic well-being because of your engagement in the FREC programme?
7. What knowledge and skills have you learnt from the FREC programme that you now use towards earning a sustainable income?
8. In what way has the FREC programme enabled you to obtain a sustainable livelihood to meet your and your family's basic and other needs?
9. Would you recommend the FREC programme to a friend/family? Why do you say so?
10. What suggestions do you have for the FREC programme to better assist participants to start or grow a micro-business to earn a sustainable livelihood?

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION LETTER FROM FREC

Ford Resource &
Engagement Centre
Ford Motor Company
Watloo Plant
Gate 1
Simon Vermooten Rd
Pretoria
+27 12 111 7887

Ford Resources and Engagement Centre
Ford Motor Company
Gate 1
Simon Vermooten Road
Pretoria

Subject: Letter of Authorisation to Conduct Research Future Families Enterprise.

Dear Prof Lombard,

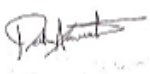
This letter will serve as authorisation for the University of Pretoria Master's students to conduct the research project entitled "The Ford Resources and Engagement Centre (FREC) programme's contribution to mitigating poverty: perspectives from participants" at Future Families Enterprises. I, Robin Learmonth authorise the master's students to conduct their research study with current participants enrolled in FREC's Entrepreneurship Mentoring Programme (EMP) and those who dropped out.

The FREC team will inform potential participants of the purpose of the study and seek their permission to provide their names to the students who will in turn communicate with inviting them to participate in the study.

This also serves as an assurance that the FREC team will provide the students with all the necessary information concerning the FREC Entrepreneurship Mentoring Programme (EMP) to enable them to conduct the study.

If you have any queries or concerns please contact Martin Matakanure at +27 12 111 7887, martinm@futurefamilies.co.za.

Yours faithfully



Dr R Learmont

APPENDIX D: UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Humanities 100. Since 1919

28 October 2022

Dear Abigail Mzayidume

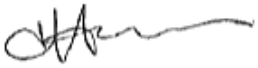
Project Title:	The Ford Resource and Engagement Centre (FREC) programme's contribution to mitigate poverty: perspectives from participants
Researcher:	Abigail Mzayidume
Supervisor(s):	Prof A Lombard
Department:	Social Work and Criminology
Reference number:	29051772 (HUM020/1022)
Degree:	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 27 October 2022. Please note that before research can commence all other approvals must have been received.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,



Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 4853| Fax +27 (0)12 420 4501 |Email pghumanities@up.ac.za | www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities

APPENDIX E: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Humanities 100.
1919 - 2019
Department of Social Work & Criminology

12/10/2022

Our Ref: Prof A Lombard
Tel: (012) 420-2325
E-mail: antoinette.lombard@up.ac.za

Researcher: Abigail Mzayidume
Mobile : 081 7588 662
E-mail: abigailmza@gmail.com

Research supervisor: Prof Antoinette Lombard
E-mail: antoinette.lombard@up.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
CURRENT AND PAST PARTICIPANTS

1. **Title of the study:** The Ford Resource and Engagement Centre (FREC) programme's contribution to mitigate poverty: perspectives from participants

2. **Goal of the study:** The goal of the study is to explore the FREC programme's contribution to mitigating poverty from the participants' perspective.

3. **Procedures:** The study will use one on one interviews to collect data from participants. The interview is estimated to approximately take one hour. The interview will be audio recorded and the recording will be transcribed for the purposes of data analysis. Only the researcher and the study supervisor will have access to recordings and transcripts. The researcher will write a research report for submission to the university. The research data will be securely stored by the University of Pretoria for a period of 10 years and destroyed afterwards. If data is used again, it will only be for research purposes.

4. **Risks and discomforts:** There are no known risks and discomforts that you may endure as a result of participation in the research study. The researcher will debrief you after the interview and if needed, refer you to Delia Nation, a social worker at Future Families for counselling and psychosocial support on matters of concern arising from the study. These services will be provided to you free of charge.

5. **Benefits**: Participants will not receive any incentives for participating in the study. However, you may benefit indirectly as your participation may leave you with a sense of satisfaction that your view is recognised in recommending strategies for the FREC programme to mitigate poverty for sustainable livelihood outcomes.

6. **Participants' rights:** Participation in the study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview. You also have the right to refuse to answer any question during the interview that you do not wish to respond to without any consequences to you. You have the right to ask questions on the proposed study before you give informed consent to participate in the study. You also have the right to access the research data that you shared in the interview.

7. **Confidentiality and anonymity:** Your identity will be known to the researcher; however a pseudo name will be used to protect your identity. Information collected in the study will be treated confidentially and your name will not appear in the research report, conference paper(s) or scientific journal in which the results may be published. Findings will not be presented in a way that could be directly linked to any specific participant.

8. **Person to contact:** If you have questions or concerns relating to the study, you may contact the researcher, Abigail Mzayidume at **081 7588 662** or send an email to abigailmza@gmail.com

Declaration

I, ……., understand my rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being conducted.

_____	_____	_____
Date	Place	Participant's signature
_____	_____	_____
Date	Place	Researcher's signature