

**Perspectives on Family Resilience in the Face of Unemployment**

by

**LESIBA SYDNEY MONAKEDI**

(Student no.: 2019003173)

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YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



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**BLOEMFONTEIN**

**Supervisor: Dr L Nel**

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I, Lesiba Sydney Monakedi, hereby declare that the dissertation titled “*Perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment*” is my own independent work and that it has not been previously submitted by me at any other university or for another postgraduate qualification.

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**Dr L Nel (Research Supervisor)**

November 2020

## Proof of Language Editing



Monica Botha  
T/a I'Avenir Consulting  
PO Box 32945  
WAVERLEY  
0135

Cellular: 083 269 0757  
Fax: 0866 754 626  
E-mail: monicabo@iantic.net

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that I have edited and proofread the document entitled

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**MONICA BOTHA**

16 November 2020

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## Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the resilience, in particular optimal functioning and coping mechanisms from families affected by unemployment within the City of Johannesburg. In South Africa, unemployment has been a thorny issue over the past decades despite government interventions through the establishment and implementation of various policies. The aftermaths of unemployment have affected the lives of many South African families negatively, most specifically, their functioning and well-being. Therefore, unemployment is attributed as a risk factor that affects many families negatively. The family resilience theory was applied as a theoretical lens asserting that a family can, despite adversity and risk, thrive through the members' collaborative efforts. This study thus intends to explore the embedded protective factors, coping strategies and thriving potentials families tap into while they are faced by unemployment challenges. A qualitative paradigmatic approach and a multiple case study design were employed to achieve the aim of the study. A purposive and snowball sampling technique was applied to recruit nine participants who met the selection criteria. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews from family members deemed as breadwinners and/or key family providers. Each participant had two interviews which were four months apart, amounting to a total of 18 transcripts. The transcripts were analysed through a hybrid process which incorporated both the inductive and deductive logics of thematic analysis. The findings of this study generated nine themes which were clustered into three domains, namely the family belief systems, organisational patterns or processes, and communication. The results are indicative of key protective factors which facilitated coping and functioning as unemployed families managed to surmount the adversities of unemployment. It therefore implies that, despite the challenges experienced, families demonstrated resilience which is embedded within the identified protective factors.

**Keywords:** unemployment, family resilience, family coping, family functioning, protective factors

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction of the Study**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present the research problem to provide the reader with the rationale behind the choice of the research study, including the value and potential implications of the study. I further articulate on the theoretical framework guiding the current study by highlighting key principles of the theory. The chapter further outlines the research questions guiding the study's aim and objectives. I further present the methodological overview of the study which is discussed thoroughly in Chapter 3. This chapter concludes with definitions of key concepts, followed by an outline of chapters.

### **1.2 Research Problem**

The research problem in this study relates to the high unemployment rate of 23.3% in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2019), which implies that many individuals and families are facing adversity. The rise in unemployment rate is argued to be as a result of many factors, such as poor economy, corruption and skills mismatch (Department of Labour, 2019; Du Toit et al., 2018; Plagerson et al., 2019). Indeed, the economic climate and political landscape have not transformed this protracted social crisis. Various research studies further highlighted the negative impact unemployment has on families, which poses an immediate threat to their well-being and well-functioning (Izaks et al., 2017; Khumalo et al., 2012; Makiwane et al., 2017; Theron & Phasha, 2015). Currently, the world is hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020), which forced countries to impose lockdown restrictions (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020). The implementation of Disaster Management Regulation Act 57 of 2002 in relation to national lockdown amid the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the ailing economy immeasurably, which implies that many people will be unemployed. In this sense, unemployment is perceived as a risk factor, putting many families in adverse or challenging situations.

In familiarising myself with literature on the subject matter, it came to my attention that previous studies explored the unemployment phenomenon from a vulnerability and pathological perspective, by looking at the underlying factors and their effects on families (Du Toit et al., 2018; Hendriks, 2016; Magruder, 2012; Mahlangu, 2015; Makaringe &

Khobai, 2018). However, this study explores the adversities of unemployment from a resilience perspective with the intent to unmask the embedded protective factors, coping strategies and thriving potential in affected families. This is supported by the identified gap in exploring unemployment from a resilience perspective, especially within the South African context.

This study has taken a different approach by introducing Walsh's family resilience perspective (Walsh, 1996, 1998, 2003a, 2003b, 2012, 2016a, 2016b) as a theoretical lens to explore families' functioning and coping mechanisms in the face of unemployment. The perspective proposes that a family can, despite adversity and risk, thrive through the members' collaborative efforts (see Section 1.3).

In view of the above, the present study explores perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment through unemployed family members in the City of Johannesburg. The affected families share their coping experiences in the presence of unemployment, and the results are presented in Chapter 4. These results, through the application of multiple case study design (Yin, 2018), may benefit future unemployed families on how to potentially thrive within and across similar contexts. Furthermore, it might shape and influence policy-makers to amend or establish relevant micro- and macro-economic policies to manage this adversity. Therefore, this study, through its findings and recommendations, has the potential to inspire the City of Johannesburg Council to amend or establish programmes with a view to improve the lives of its residents, amidst the rising unemployment rate.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is premised on the Family Resilience Theory (Walsh, 1996), which stems from the Family Systems Theory and Family Stress and Coping Theory (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). The family resilience perspective views family functions in relation to socio-cultural contexts and multi-dimensional family life circles. According to the Family Resilience Theory of Walsh (1996), family resilience is forged in the presence or face of adversity as it looks for strengths during stressful situations. Families facing adversities are therefore viewed as being challenged rather than as non-functioning, and affirms their reparative and growth potential (Walsh, 1996, 2003a).

The perspective further proposes that a family can, despite adversity and risk, thrive through the members' collaborative efforts. Family members, through their family patterns and processes, are able to reconstruct adversity by contextualising it in a meaningful and

achievable manner. Such families have the potential to identify and fortify key processes that enable them to surmount present disruptive challenges and persistent stresses. Therefore, a family as a functional unit and through interactional processes is able to function optimally in the face of a significant stress (Patterson, 2002a).

Walsh (1996) has, after extensive research on family functioning and coping, developed a family resilience framework comprising key interactional processes. Other scholars advancing research in family resilience (Black & Lobo, 2008; Herdiana et al., 2017; Oh & Chang, 2014), through their findings, also corroborated the prominent key interactional attributes of resilient and healthy families in the face of adversity, as proposed by Walsh (1996). The framework includes factors relating to belief systems, organisational processes and communication/problem solving processes (Walsh, 1996, 2003b), which interact within a system called family. According to Patterson (2002b), these processes are protective factors which moderate the relationship between a family's exposure to significant risk and their ability to show competence in accomplishing family functions. In this sense, the family resilience is embedded on the aforementioned protective factors.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions were developed in relation to the study's theoretical framework, as discussed in Section 1.3 above, and played a pivotal role as guiding principles when deciding on the methodological aspect.

The current study seeks to answer the following underlying questions:

- a) How do families in the City of Johannesburg cope and function in the face of unemployment?
- b) Which resilience processes do families tap into, in coping with the adverse effects of unemployment?

#### **1.5 Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the resilience from a Family Resilience Theory (Walsh, 1996) perspective, in particular, optimal functioning and coping mechanisms from families affected by unemployment within the City of Johannesburg. This was conducted through exploring family members' experiences of their functioning and coping mechanisms in the face of unemployment.

The main objectives of this study were to:

- a) Explore families` resilience in the face of unemployment.
- b) Describe key resilience processes families tapped into during the adverse event of unemployment.

## **1.6 Methodological Overview**

This study employed a qualitative research paradigm to enable the exploration of real-life context through detailed and in-depth methods (Creswell, 2014). This paradigm has further afforded an opportunity to explore and understand family resilience within its identified natural context, being unemployment.

In operationalising the study`s aim and research questions, a multiple case study design was adopted to further enable the researcher to explore the differences within and between cases in order to integrate and compare findings across cases (Yin, 2018). This implies that the researcher has identified more than one case meeting the selection criteria to explore in the face of unemployment.

This study recruited nine (9) participants. The first participant was recruited through purposive sampling (Creswell, 2014), and the other eight (8) through non-probability snowball sampling (Maxwell, 2013). These participants met the following inclusion criteria: a) aged between 25 and 40-years; b) unemployed for a minimum of 6 months; c) residing in the City of Johannesburg; and d) fluent in English. Furthermore, participants were regarded either as the breadwinner (or one of the key providers) from a household with or without children. In this sense, gender and race were not used as a criteria.

Data was collected through two individual semi-structured interviews with each participant, culminated in 18 interviews in total. These interviews were conducted four months apart in order to allow for reflection.

Collected data was analysed through a process of hybrid thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This process entails the integrated application of both the inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) logics of thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Through this method, the researcher was able to generate codes from raw data and fit them into the coding template developed prior to the interviews, in order to generate themes.



## 1.7 Conceptual Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following concepts are confined to the study's context as defined hereunder.

**Unemployment** - refers to people between the ages of 15 and 64 years who are able and available to work, but without the opportunity to do so (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

**Family resilience** - refers to the competency of a family unit in order to function optimally in the face of adversity (Walsh, 1996).

**Family functioning** – refers to family members' collaborated efforts in achieving formulated goals and connectedness as well as a sense of well-being (Epstein, 1983).

**Coping** – refers to behavioural and cognitive efforts to manage an appraised unemployed or stressful situation (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

## 1.8 Outline of the Chapters

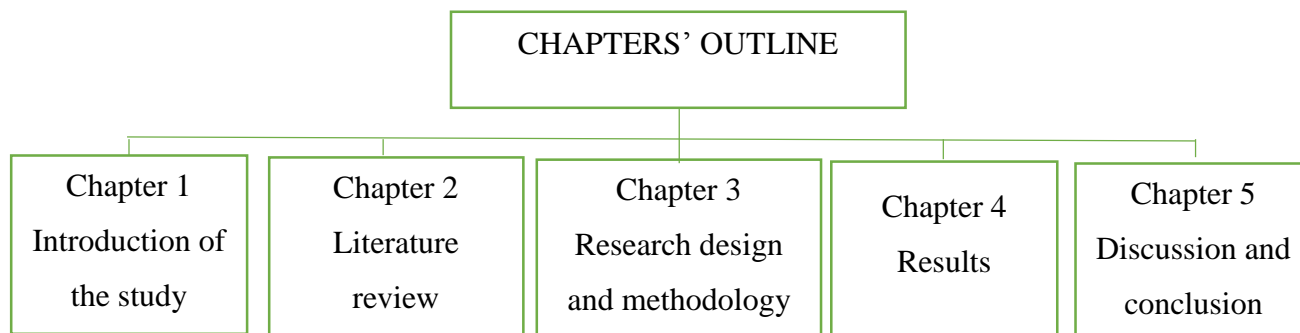
This study consists of five chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on both resilience and family resilience from an ecological and developmental perspective in order to understand family functioning in its broader life-cycle. This is followed by the determinant factors of family resilience. The chapter further articulates Walsh's (1996) family resilience theory, including the formulated framework. The last section of this chapter highlights literature on unemployment as a risk factor, particularly within the South African context.

In Chapter 3 I present the detailed research design, methodological process and protocol followed throughout this study. This relates to the research paradigm, design and the sampling method. The chapter also outlines the data collection and analysis process and protocol. The last part outlines the trustworthiness as well as the ethical issues considered in the study.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study, as well as the theoretical framework followed. The results will be given in the format of themes, backed by direct quotes from the participants.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides more nuanced discussions of the results in relation to the relevant literature and theoretical framework. The incorporation of results is followed by the limitations, recommendations and concluding remarks of the study.

**Figure 1*****Schematic Presentation of Chapters' Outline*****1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a summary of the study with the exception of the results and discussions, which are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively. The chapter further discussed the research problem statement, followed by the theoretical framework the study has adopted in analysis, interpretation and discussion. A summary of the design and methodology highlighted the process undertaken in responding to the study's research questions. Key terms were defined to provide the context in which these concepts were applied in this study. Lastly, a summary of the chapters' outline was presented and will be discussed fully in subsequent chapters.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The literature review that follows explores family resilience by introducing resilience as a theoretical concept and highlighting some conceptual differences. It further explores resilience from a systemic view by articulating the ecological and developmental perspectives to understand how families function in a broader life-cycle.

A family resilience perspective from Walsh's (1996) Family Resilience Framework (FRF) is discussed by exploring the key processes of this framework. To further understand the framework, existing research on family resilience from a South African context is discussed.

Lastly, the current status of unemployment in South Africa, including the cause and government intervention programmes to alleviate the adversity, are presented.

### 2.2 Understanding Resilience

#### 2.2.1 *Defining Resilience*

As part of the movement towards more positive psychology theories and treatment modalities, a number of scholars began to redirect focus towards a competency-based, health-oriented paradigm, recognising and amplifying family strengths and resources (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012; McCubbin & Patterson, 1982; Patterson, 2002b; Sobolewski & Amato, 2005; Ungar, 2002; Walsh, 1993, 1998). Despite a growing body of research on resilience, there is little consensus among researchers on an operational definition and meaning of the concept. However, the common features across the definitions and meanings suggest that resilience occurs in the face of risk or adversities, and emerges from transactions between an individual and their environment. It further suggests that individuals develop strengths and capacity by navigating their way to resources in order to sustain functioning and well-being.

In defining resilience, it is worth noting that resilience is not the absence of pathology or crisis, as it embraces the strengths, resources and competency under stressful conditions. This implies that those who are considered resilient despite adversity emerge resourceful with the ability to readjust, cope and function optimally. In this sense, Masten (2001), for example, defines resilience as the phenomenon characterised by positive outcomes in the presence of harsh conditions or threats to adaptation or development. In addition, Ungar (2008b, p. 22)

defines resilience as “the individual capacity to navigate their way to resources that sustain well-being”. In these definitions, the outcome and the adverse situation are positioned as key determinant factors of resilience. For example, the definitions highlight one’s ability to function amidst stressful situation but it does not indicate how that happens.

Other researchers, including Cicchetti and Garmezy (1993) and Patterson (2002a), describe the construct resilience as the maintenance of competent functioning in the presence of significant risk or stressful situations. Yet, Theron (2012) outlines resilience as the ability to resist surmounting life pressures by emerging positive and resourceful. Similarly, Van Breda (2015, p. 46) adds that “resilience conveys both the capacity to bend without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back in the face of adversity” . Despite the differences in definitions, the common feature denotes resilience as a flexible and mediating process which enables recovery and adaption to adverse situations. Coupled with other findings, Van Breda (2018) asserts resilience as a process that engages multiple factors to acquire beyond expected outcomes in the face or wake of adversity.

In summary, there is no clear-cut operational definition of resilience provided. Although some elements of the definitions appeared to overlap in features, there are, however, still some gaps. For example, research should clearly indicate how resilience mediate positive outcomes and coping in the presence of a stressful situation. However, the agreed upon themes emerging from these definitions are that resilience is a process that leads to an outcome, and the fundamental focus of its research is on the mediating process between adversity and outcome (Rutter, 2012; Ungar, 2008a).

In view of the above, a debate is further advanced towards resilience being either a trait, such as a variable or a process, and the arguments are presented in the following sub-sections.

### **2.2.2 Resilience as an Individual Trait**

Several studies of resilience (Antonovsky, 1979; Garmezy, 1991; Kobasa, 1979; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Werner & Smith, 1992) argue that resilience is a trait-like variable. It is described as an emergent individual capacity present to a greater or lesser extent in all humans, supported by the presence of protective factors in the face of adverse situations. It thus implies that a number of intra-psychic personality traits are linked to resilience.

Firstly, individuals who have the capacity to control their situations were regarded as being resilient. For example, research studies by Luthar (1991) and Masten et al. (1990) found individuals who scored high on the locus of control variable, to be more hopeful. This implies that they viewed themselves as having control to influence positive change over their current stressful situation. As a result, those individuals we considered resilient as they had the capacity and responsibility to cope optimally in the face of adversity.

Secondly, self-esteem is found to be a critical precursor of individual resilience, mainly because the development of self-efficacy and competency is likely to be hindered in children who are shy and over-protected to accept challenges (Kumpfer, 1999). In a developmental study of Rutter (1985), children with high levels of self-esteem were found to have hope and good personal control. The study investigated individual traits such as happiness, easy-going temperament and high intelligence, which were helpful in building resiliency. In another study by Werner (1993), self-esteem and self-efficacy were found to promote coping rather than a sense of helplessness in dysfunctional families and the survivors of mentally ill parents. Therefore, self-esteem and the ability to preserve it tend to elicit more positive responses while facilitating coping strategies and problem-solving skills.

In addition, Connor and Davidson (2003) conceive resilience as a multi-dimensional personal characteristic that enables an individual to cope in the face of adversity. The characteristics such as hardiness, goal orientation, adaptability to patience and tolerance are considered as features of resilience. Other earlier studies found higher academic and intellectual abilities in resilient children as compared to the less resilient children (Werner, 1989; Werner & Smith, 1992). This implies that resilient children do better at school and in social activities as over-achievers than under-achievers. Consistent with these findings, Garmezy (1991) found increased intellectual abilities, particularly verbal skills in resilient children facing stressful situations such as living with parents who are suffering from schizophrenia. Despite the stressful situation, children still continued to do well, which positions intelligence as a key individual protective factor influenced by genetic, post-natal biological variables and learning experiences.

Another individual trait enhancing resilience in the face of adversity includes emotional stability and emotional management. Several studies (Seligman, 1990; Wolin & Wolin, 1993) found individuals who scored high in the emotional characteristic domain to be resilient. The domains in assessment include happiness, recognition of feelings, ability to control anger and humour. It is therefore important to note that those who are able to manage their emotions also do well even in the presence of a stressful situation.

Similarly, moral reasoning has been found to be one of the enhancers of resilience. For example, in a developmental study of Kohlberg and Kramer (1969), resilient children were found to have independently separated themselves from their normative groups by becoming their own moral guardians. This is indicative that cognitive aspects of morality are critical to resilience as they encompass judging right and wrong, normative, valuing compassion, fairness and serving others. Good moral reasoning is indicative of good conscience that extends goodwill to humanity.

Taylor (1989) further advances research on factors of resilience in children with positive temperamental traits such as responsiveness to environmental changes, capability to maintain psychological equilibrium and the ability to be comforted after stress. The findings imply that those with positive temperaments are able to navigate and adjust in the face of a stressful situation. Similarly, a study by Phasha (2010) on educational resilience among African survivors of child sexual abuse in South Africa, found victims of sexual abuse optimistic as a result of acceptance of the situation. In his findings, victims of sexual abuse had no self-blaming attitude, which implies that they developed self-acceptance realising that they were not responsible for their own abuse, which in turn alleviates feelings of anger and guilt. This is indicative of a positive temperamental trait.

Another personality trait relates to behavioural social competency skills such as social, problem-solving, communication and peer resistance which are found to be associated with individual resilience (Murphy, 1985). This study found children who are high in behavioural social competencies as being prosocial, as well as having the ability to be empathetic to the needs of others. Therefore, having social competency skills helps individuals cope better with stressful situations.

In addition to the multi-dimensional personal characteristic, a research study by Connor and Davidson (2003) on youth describes resilient youth as being perseverant and determined in their cognitive style. The study found determined individuals to be highly creative and flexible in planning and developing new goals as compared to non-determined individuals. Consistent with Connor and Davidson (2003), Black and Lobo (2011) found individuals who are self-reliance and self-determined having the capacity to cope under stressful situations. Therefore, determination is also regarded as one of the enhancers of resilience.

Closer to self-reliance and self-determination is independence. Werner and Smith (1992), for example, found resilient individuals to be autonomous and self-directed, with the ability to cope with the accumulative stressors. It thus implies that the autonomous

individuals will avoid negative influences by focusing on goal-directed outcomes such as studying. Consistent with these findings, Zulu (2018) explored resilience in Black South African women who grew up without their fathers' presence. The findings revealed the women as independent, content and empowered, which challenge the pathological notion that suggest the development of detrimental outcomes for children growing up without their fathers. The results assert independence as a good precursor of resilience, which enables individuals to cope with the stressful situations.

Lastly, the majority of scholars advancing individual traits linked to resilience focused on the intra-psycho characteristics. However, Luthar et al. (2000) contribute a different perspective which argues that a good physical status is also predictive of resiliency. For instance, good achievers in sport competitions increase confidence, self-efficacy and self-worth. Werner (1989) and Werner and Smith (1992) also found resilience in Kauai children who were physically healthy during infancy and childhood. This is indicative that a balance between physical and mental characteristics plays a pivotal role in the enhancement of resilience. For example, individuals with few physical problems and strength may internalise their physical strength and interpret themselves as psychologically strong.

In conclusion, the findings on resilience as an individual trait emphasise the inter-psycho personality factors as the cornerstone and predictors of resilience in the face of stressful situations. Coupled with inter-psycho personality traits, is the presence of good physical status. These traits, despite adversity, enable individuals to cope better and at some point, emerge stronger. It therefore implies that resilience is embodied within the internal coping process.

### ***2.2.3 Resilience as a Process***

Over the past decades, the narrative advocated individual intra-psycho personality characteristics as the precursor of resilience in the face of adversity or stressful situations. This was, however, challenged by a growing number of researchers (Brooks, 1994; Kumpfer, 1999; Masten, 2001; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 2002a; Spiegel, 1993; Ungar, 2002, Walsh, 1996; Werner, 1993; Werner & Smith, 2001) who started to search for sources beyond individual capacity as factors contributing to individual resilience under stressful situations. The researchers argue that resilience involves a dynamic process that encourages people towards positive functioning despite harsh conditions or significant adversity. This is mainly because the researchers realised the mutual interaction between biological and

environmental factors in the emergence of resilience. It therefore implies that resilience is not a fixed attribute, but a dynamic interaction of multiple risk and protective factors over time involving individuals' socio-cultural contexts as they shape experiences (Carrey & Ungar, 2007; Patterson, 2002b; Walsh, 1996, 1998, 2003a).

A body of research advocating resilience as a process contrasts the individual trait-like variable perspective on the conceptualisation of resilience under the following premise. Firstly, resilience is being individualised without consideration of external sources such as families, social and political context which are influential factors (Ungar, 2008a, 2018; Van Breda, 2018). By merely avoiding external sources, it therefore suggests that individuals are regarded solely responsible for improving their own environments without the support of influential factors. Shaikh and Kauppi (2010) argue that individuals need support structures such as families, society or state in order to cope with collective challenges. Therefore, it is inadequate to construe resilience as a static individual trait.

Secondly, a trait-like perspective relies on selective strengths, such as intellectual function that helps individuals to cope with adversity, and is mainly focused on childhood. This conceptualisation of resilience has the potential to put blame on the individual for poor adaptation and coping with adverse situations. Moreover, the trait-like perspective is static as it does not guide a further search for processes underlying resilience or designing appropriate interventions in the practice and policy domain.

In contrast, research advocating resilience as a process asserts resilience as a complex interactive concept comprising psychological, relational and environmental factors. This body of research focuses on the contribution of external sources such as families, groups, services and communities to assist individuals in coping with adversity. For example, Widom et al. (2018) found secure attachments, family stability and secured relationships with parents as associated with fewer behavioural problems and better psychological well-being in maltreated children. This implies that good relationships, even from peers, teachers and other adults, play a central role within the resilience processes. For instance, a South African study by Theron and Theron (2013), examined why some Black South Africans showed resilience despite the challenges of poverty. Their findings revealed attachment to parents and siblings, as well as connections to ancestors and/or God as protective factors enhancing the resilience in the Black South Africans who were being studied. This is indicative that resilience should be understood in terms of processes as opposed to identifying it as a static factor, like the trait-like researchers do (Rutter et al., 2008; Walsh, 2003a). This view further asserts that a

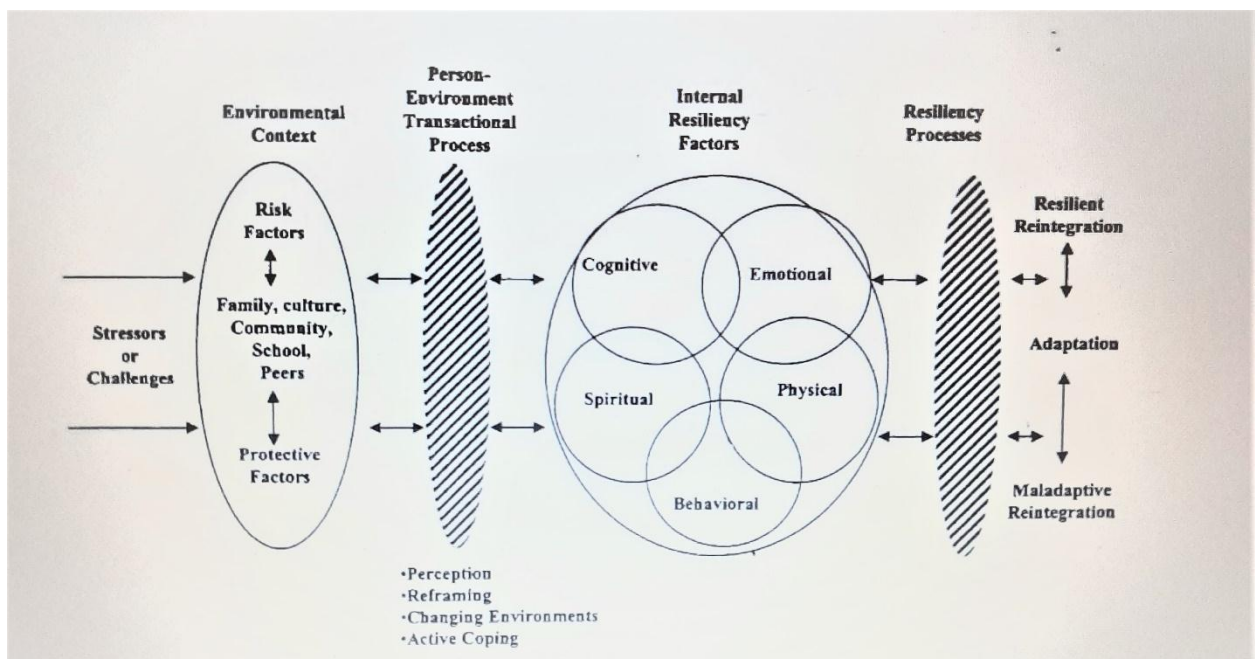


broader social context should be considered in order to understand resilience (Kumpfer, 1999).

In addition, resilience as a process significantly considers individuals' socio-cultural context and the environment to which they are exposed. Consistent with this assertion, Kumpfer (1999) perceives resilience as a dynamic framework (see Figure 2) that permits the interactions between individuals who are resilient and their adverse situations. Kumpfer (1999) further argues that resilience is a transactional model which includes (a) environmental precursors commonly called risk and protective factors, (b) characteristics of the resilient person, (c) their resilient reintegration or positive outcome after a negative life experience, as well as (d) dynamic processes that mediate between the person and their environment and the person and the outcome. A review study by Theron (2018) on resilience in Sub-Saharan adolescents revealed factors such as kin and household support, and school base support such as teachers and peers, as critical resilience-enablers. In addition, Jefferis and Theron (2017), in their study promoting resilience among Sesotho-speaking adolescence in the Free State, found adolescents sharing emotions with their teachers at schools while teachers listen and provide guidance by inspiring hope for a better future and initiating supportive partnerships. This further supports the notion that resilience involves a multi-faceted process amongst variables which interact and interdepend on each other.

**Figure 2**

***Kumpfer's (1999) Resilience Model***



A holistic view of resilience will thus integrate nature and process the whole person, including emotional and relational well-being. Therefore, resilience as a process or protective mechanism, as opposed to a trait-like variable, can be located within networks of social relationships with the ecosystem, such as individuals, families and socio-cultural contexts. It is thus worth noting the mediating process as the cornerstone of resilience research and the family has increasingly been recorded as a vital source of resilience for individuals, particularly children and youth.

## **2.3 A Systemic View of Resilience**

### **2.3.1 *Understanding Family Resilience***

A large body of research has expanded our knowledge on resilience over the past two decades; research has shifted from individual resilience to family resilience (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Patterson, 2002b; Walsh, 2016a). This section builds on the concept of resilience as a process, and applying it to the family as a functioning unit or a system. The theoretical foundations of family resilience emanate from systems theory, family stress, coping and adaptation theory (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Patterson, 2002a). According to Von Bertalanffy (1968, p. 36), a system refers to “a complex of interacting elements that are open to and interact with their environment to self-regulate and self-correct”. Consistent with Von Bertalanffy’s (1968) assertion, Luhmann (2000) argues that a system is a philosophy that sees an organisation, group or community as a set of interrelated and interdependent parts. This philosophy focuses on the organisation as a whole, its interaction with the environment, and its needs to achieve equilibrium.

A systemic view of resilience, from the systems theoretical lens, relates to the family resilience through a combination of ecological and developmental perspectives (Herdiana et al., 2017). The system theory is therefore helpful to understand family functions within broader socio-cultural contexts and multi-dimensional family life-circles. From this understanding, it is thus important to note that systems comprise a broader spectrum beyond individuals, which can be referenced to families, communities, social and spiritual organisations, political and structural systems that transform inputs into outputs (Von Bertalanffy, 1968).

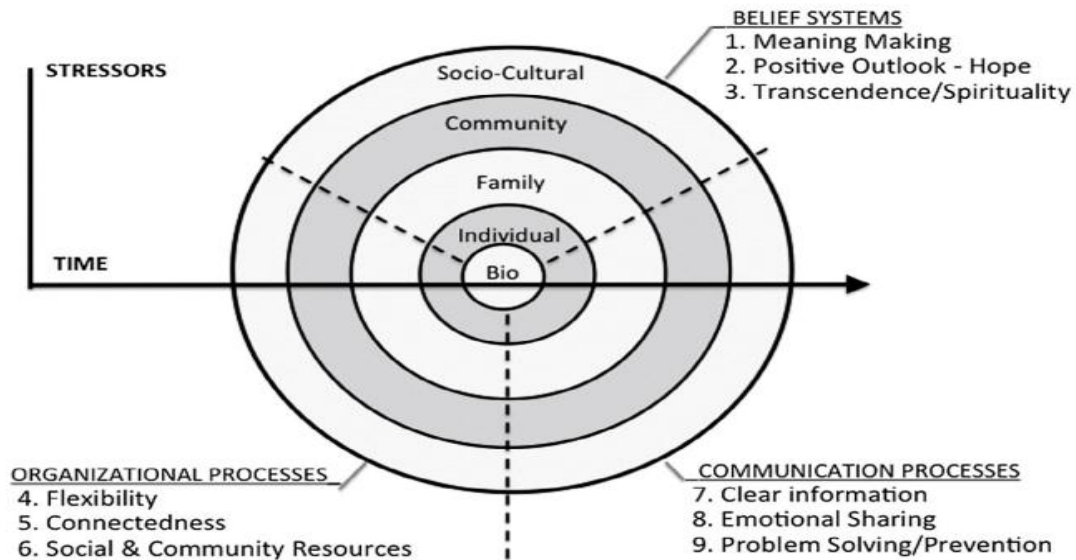
Based on the system perspective, a family can be regarded as an organisation and/or a system. Building on this perspective, the concept of family resilience is presented, involving

processes that foster relational resilience as a functional unit. Therefore, resilience is viewed within the family context with an understanding that it facilitates and influences the development and well-being of its members. For instance, Bhana and Bachoo (2011) consider the role a family plays in helping individuals by managing and emerging stronger in the presence of high risk. This implies that families help to lessen the burden and offer protection to its members in the event of stressful situations.

The Family Resilience Theory of Walsh (1996) refers to the competency of a family unit in order to function optimally in the face of adversity. A focus on family resilience seeks to identify and foster key processes that enable families to cope more effectively and emerge stronger from persistent stresses, from within or from outside the family. It shifts the perspective from viewing families facing adversities as non-functioning to viewing them as being challenged and affirms their reparative and growth potential. It further proposes that a family can, despite adversity and risk, thrive through the members' collaborative efforts. Family resilience thus recognises the strengths and capabilities of families in the face of adverse situations (Patterson, 2002b). It also incorporates a developmental view of family challenges and responses over time, considering how relational resilience processes vary with different phases of the adaptation to a risk (Walsh, 2012, 2016a). This perspective proposes that every family has a potential of being resilient, despite the stressful situation a family might be facing at that particular time.

Consistent with Walsh's (1996) assertion on family resilience, McCubbin (2001) and Patterson (2002a) see family resilience as a dynamic process involving the interactions between protective and risk factors. For the purpose of this study, family is viewed holistically as a collaborative and functional unit rather than in an individual capacity. The system approach of a family as a functional unit is central in describing resilience processes. Therefore, the resilience processes work in a system called family.

A further perspective from literature (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Walsh, 2003, 2016a) suggests that a blend of or systemic view of resilience integrates the ecological and developmental perspectives to view family functioning in relation to its broader socio-cultural context and multigenerational life cycle (Figure 3). The perspectives are discussed further in the next section.

**Figure 3*****Multilevel Recursive Processes of Resilience (Walsh, 2016a)***

### 2.3.2 Modern Families

A family is a social component known in most parts of the world to provide immediate care for its members, socialisation of children, and support and guidance. The family plays a critical role in the well-functioning and well-being of its members. In Western tradition, a family is described in terms of nuclear relations comprising a father, mother and their biological or adopted children. In South Africa, an ideal family, according to most African cultures, classically is inclusive of extended family such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins and other relatives that form a family that functions in union (Makiwane & Berry, 2013; Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011). In pre-industrial times, most African families were argued to be patriarchal and polygamous in nature, where husbands were regarded as breadwinners and wives as responsible for household chores and functioning (Amoateng & Heaton, 2015). Families' broader formations were mainly interconnected with the general community. This tradition has been quite evident in family activities such as marriage, rituals and funerals involving members of the community.

However, over the past decades there has been an increase and change in traditional family formations. These changes can be attributed to many factors relating to evolving

patterns of modernity, economic development and social values (Makiwane et al., 2017; Rabe & Naidoo, 2015; Seekings, 2008; Spiegel, 1996). Firstly, for example, Harvey (1994) argues that changes in politics, the socio-economic environment, including urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation in South Africa, have led to changes in the family structure, roles and responsibilities. Investments were prioritised in cities and urban areas, which led to increasing urbanisation as rural conditions degenerated.

Secondly, migration has been attributed as another factor influencing family composition. This was noted by Hall et al. (2018) in their study, as it has resulted in the migration of key family providers such as fathers, mothers and caregivers, leaving behind their families in pursuit of economic opportunities in cities and urban areas. Many children were therefore deserted and separated from their parents as a result of migrant labour. Those who remain behind, mostly females, were presumably struggling to fulfil the breadwinner and caregiver roles in most families.

Thirdly, the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, increasing divorce rates and rising unemployment have led to another form of family composition as a result of an increase in female-headed households, grandparent-headed households and child-headed households (Sewpaul & Pillay, 2011; Sooryamoorthy & Makhoba, 2016). In addition, a study by Makiwane and Berry (2013) further asserts poverty, high mortality due to HIV/AIDS, unemployment and inequality as the main challenges affecting families in contemporary South Africa. This has resulted in an increase in orphanage institutions as a result of paternal care (Department of Social Development, 2012).

In addition, marriage between males and females was also a traditional norm and practice across many cultures. In the democratic dispensation after 1994, a South African constitution through common laws made a provision for same-sex marriages, which came into law in 2006. This brought about a change in the traditional family composition, whereby a family is composed of same sex partners as a couple. Notwithstanding the importance of marriage in families, many were however faced by challenges which led to divorce (Makiwane et al., 2017). High divorce rates affect the family structures, resulting in the reinstated families that include step-parents and step-children families.

These transformations, as alluded to above, have not only changed the family composition, but also affected the family functioning and well-being of its members. Many families had to readjust and adapt to new situations in order to provide care to its members. It is therefore evident that families in South Africa can no longer in their entirety be described as nuclear and extended family concepts, rather as a multi-dimension, dynamic and evolving.

### ***2.3.3 Ecological Perspective on Family Resilience***

The ecological perspective perceives the resilience of a family as emerging from multilevel processes in which each family engages. These multilevel processes relate to what Van Breda and Theron (2018, p. 2) termed as “resilience-enablers”, which involve the socio-ecological factors such as the society, culture and state institutions. It is argued that these ecological factors enable resilience within families facing adverse situations (Theron, 2016, Ungar, 2011; Van Breda, 2016). It thus asserts the significant relationships within families and the influence of the social environment in the development and functioning of those families facing adversities.

In addition, the perspective also looks at various domains which could potentially influence resilience and risk outside the family unit, such as community networks, schools or work environments, as well as other larger social systems (Walsh, 2003b). In this sense, the ecological perspective helps us to understand family resilience in dynamic terms, emerging from interactions between what occurs within families` transactional processes as they reach out and negotiate their position with their external environments, such as political, social, economic and racial (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Walsh, 2012). This implies that families are not necessarily independent from the broader social happenings, meaning that family resilience considers how families respond to challenging life-worlds (Ungar, 2013). It therefore indicates that resiliency is reinforced and enabled as families interact with these multilevel sources.

Others scholars from an ecological perspective, such as Masten (2011) and Rutter (2012), place the interaction between psychological, genetic, environmental and relational factors as critical to resilience. This person-in-environment context further signifies the interconnectedness of various factors playing a key role in the growth and development of families in coping with challenges. Additional to key family transactional processes in achieving positive life outcomes are stakeholders, such as practitioners, policy-makers as well as spiritual leaders (Masten, 2014; Theron, 2012; Ungar, 2013). The ecological perspective thus helps us to understand the sources of resilience in dynamic and systematic terms as families navigate through the said sources to cope in the face or wake of challenges. It is therefore worth noting that a family should be understood within the context of its community and the larger society.

Lastly, families are able to cope and function better as they tap into socio-ecological sources. For example, a South African study by Mampane (2014) found families coping and

functioning well when they interact with broader social systems such as extended families, schools, organisations and communities, especially when they are facing challenges. The systems in which family members are exposed significantly shape their experiences and how they perceive adversities. The perspective further considers how cultural and spiritual influences affect developments in social systems where individuals and families perish and thrive (Walsh, 2016a).

#### ***2.3.4 Developmental Perspective on Family Resilience***

Family resilience can be viewed as a multidetermined process extending over time. The developmental perspective helps us to understand the processes that foster family resilience over three stages. First, it looks at emerging challenges and responses over time rather than looking at a set of fixed traits and response as a once-off (Patterson, 2002a). Emerging challenges could relate to divorce or illnesses the family is facing, and the interest is on the manner in which the family responds, as there is no single successful response to adversities.

Second, the perspective looks at cumulative stressors such as prolonged unemployment, as it could spark relational stress and conflict (Walsh, 2003b). The ongoing stressor heightens risks and could disrupt family functioning (Patterson, 2002b). This perspective looks at the nature of the stressor and how it accumulates over time.

Lastly, the perspective looks at a life-cycle, in particular, functioning and symptoms of distress in context relative to its status as it moves forward over the life course and across generations (Walsh, 2016a). Due to different family dynamics, functioning is assessed in context relative to each family's unique values, structural and relational resources and life challenges. Therefore, the process for optimal functioning and the well-being of members vary over-time as challenges emerge and families emerge. This perspective does not subscribe to one solution for all families; rather it helps us to understand that every family is unique and should be attributed as such.

#### ***2.3.5 Determinants of Family Resilience***

Family resilience is determined through various factors. Every family, irrespective of culture, has differences in family resilience and adversity (Black & Lobo, 2008). Masten and Coatsworth (1998) outline dynamic factors that can build resilience in the family, such as (a)

the stage of life when families meet challenges, (b) the sources of internal or external support, (c) the lengths of adverse situation, as well as (d) the availability and the use of social support and community ties. Consistent with Masten and Coatsworth (1998), Patterson (2002a) asserts that it is important to look at the process of how families can deal with and overcome the crisis based on the characteristics of the existing stressors. Furthermore, the manner in which families process and adjust with the level of difficulties they encounter, and how they navigate the problems using the existing social support, is vital for family resilience.

McCubbin and McCubbin (1993) further reiterate the interaction between protective and recovery processes as determinant factors of family resilience. This implies that protective factors are used by families to maintain optimal family functioning, whereas recovery factors are used to rise up from adversity. Those who display protective factors in the face of significant risk have positively reached their reparative potential. For example, a South African study by Fierloos (2017), investigating resilience-building factors in Doornkop (Soweto), found families competent in parenting skills, family warmth, values, beliefs and the use of social and community resources to be resilient. These families were tapping into external resources, such as social grants and external family relationships, to cope with the stressful situation. It is evident that families strengthened their connectedness through improved communication and cohesion in coping with stressful situations.

A study by Bhana and Bachoo (2011) summarised the empirical findings of family resilience-building factors across a variety of contexts. The first factor is family beliefs systems and values as a collective set of attitudes fostering optimism and positive meaning which elicit positive outcomes in times of adversity. Secondly, good parenting styles were found to be associated with high levels of adjustment and resilience, with poor parenting styles associated with poor well-being. For example, Werner and Smith (2001) found that families of adolescents who are high achievers academically and socially, were more authoritative with regard to parental discipline and decision-making. In contrast, families of lower achieving and social maladjusted adolescents, tend to lean more toward authoritarian and permissive styles of parenting. Lastly, family cohesion and warmth were found to serve as sources of strength and family resilience, whereby the spirit of togetherness and collective efficacy promote supporting each other (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011). This is consistent with what Mkhize (2008) and Sarra and Berman (2017) refer to as “*ubuntu*”, the indigenous concept that embraces the humanitarian principles of sharing and distribution of wealth.

Oh and Chang (2014) and Black and Lobo (2008) also conducted research on factors that built family resilience. The results show that prominent attributes of resilient and healthy

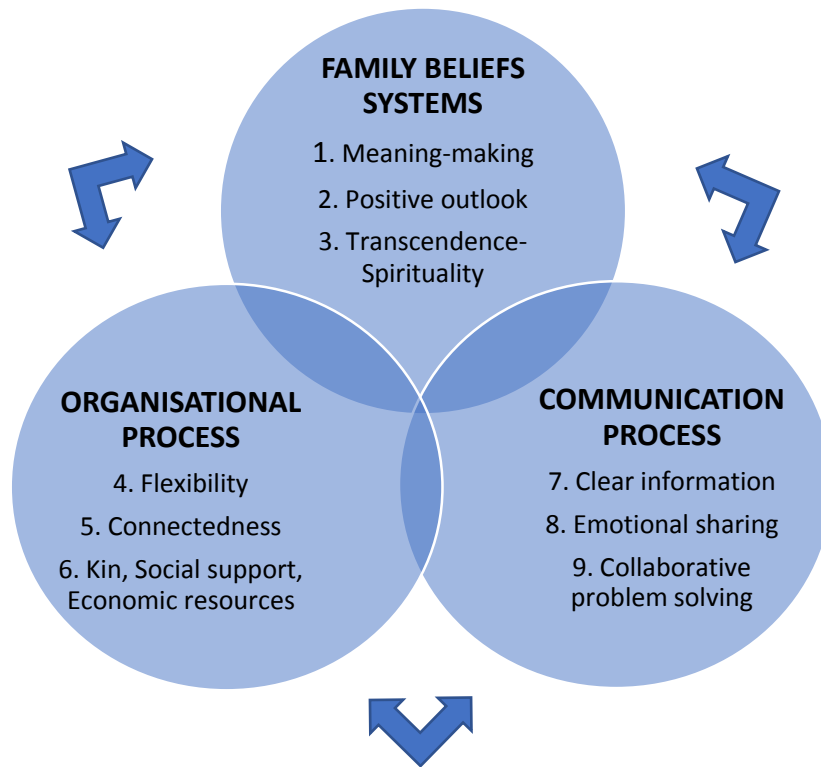


families relate to positive outlook, spirituality, harmonious family members, flexibility, family communication, financial management, family time, recreation, routine and ritual, and social support. Families which were found to have the attributes were regarded as resilient.

Similarly to the literature (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011; Black & Lobo, 2008; Herdiana et al., 2017; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993) on the determinant factors of family resilience and through extensive research on family resilience, Walsh (2003b, 2016a) packaged key processes (family resilience framework) into three main themes, namely (a) family belief systems, (b) organisational processes, and (c) communication or problem-solving processes. The framework is discussed in the following section .

#### **2.4 Key Processes in Family Resilience**

Family resilience has been seen by other scholars as a one-time response to a crisis (Lane et al., 2017), while Walsh's (1996, 2003a) postmodern framework views it as a transformative, evolving and interactive process occurring throughout the family life-cycle. The framework involves processes that foster relational resilience as a functional unit. Walsh (1996, 2002, 2003b, 2016b) developed a Family Resilience Framework (FRF) as presented in Figure 3, which is a conceptual map for practitioners to identify and target key family processes that can (a) reduce stress and vulnerabilities in high-risk situations, (b) foster healing and growth out of crisis, and (c) empower families to surmount prolonged adversity. The framework comprised three domains of family functioning, namely (a) family belief systems, (b) organisational patterns, and (c) communication processes as crucial variables contributing to resilience and effective family functioning.

**Figure 4*****Key Processes in Family Resilience (Walsh, 2003a)***

Walsh (2003a) asserts that by tapping into these key processes, families that are struggling can emerge stronger and more resourceful in meeting future challenges. However, there is no single model of healthy functioning that fits all families or situations. Every family should be viewed in context relative to their stressful situation. Therefore, the FRF is not a typology of traits of a resilient family; rather these are dynamic processes involving strengths and resources that families can access and increase resilience.

The FRF of Walsh (2003a) has been validated through Family Resilience Assessment Scale (FRAS) (Sixbey, 2005) as an instrument to measure family resilience. The assessment scale comprised a 54-item English-language questionnaire which assesses the resilience needs of a family unit along the following six dimensions: (a) family communication and problem solving, (b) utilising social and economic resources, (c) maintaining a positive outlook, (d) family connectedness, (e) family spirituality, and (f) the ability to make meaning of adversity (Sixbey, 2005). Isaacs et al. (2018) also adapted and validated the FRAS in an Afrikaans rural community in South Africa and found factors similar to those of Sixbey's (2005); however, a new factor named family and community outlook emerged, replacing maintaining a positive outlook. The FRF of Walsh (2003a), as validated through FRAS (Sixbey, 2005), comprised three domains and are further discussed in the following section.

### **2.4.1 Family Belief Systems**

Beliefs are socially constructed, evolving in a continuous process through transactions with significant others and the larger world. Similarly, the family belief system significantly influences how its members view adversity, their suffering and which options to follow in addressing adversity. Walsh (2016a) argues that belief systems broadly encompass values, convictions, attitudes, biases and assumptions, which form a set of basic premises that trigger emotional responses, influence decisions and guide actions. The belief systems are crucial in helping family members to make meaning of an adverse situation, facilitate a hopeful and positive outlook, and offer transcendence or spiritual values and connections.

#### **2.4.1.1 Meaning Making**

Well-functioning families employ a collaborative approach in crisis situations as shared challenges. The manner in which family members make sense of crisis and bestow it with meaning is crucial for their resilience. They normalise challenges and contextualise them in view of their family's adverse situation. By so doing, family members gain a shared sense of coherence (Choudhury & Broman, 2016) by reorganising adversity as a challenge that is meaningful, comprehensible and manageable to address. Therefore, family members' subjective appraisal of their situation and options influences their coping response and adaptation as they move forward (Walsh, 1998).

#### **2.4.1.2 Positive Outlook**

Walsh (2003b) argues that hope is essential to the spirit and is based on faith. It is further asserted that in problem-saturated situations, it is essential to regenerate hope from despair in order for family members to see possibilities, tap into potential resources and strive to surmount obstacles. Hope instils confidence in overcoming challenges. For example, Taylor (1989) found that positive illusions sustain hope for those dealing with adversity, such as life-threatening illness. Black and Lobo (2008) echoed that those who hold positive illusions are encouraged, focused on potential and affirmed strengths. A family that has hope takes active initiatives and preserves by acknowledging that some of the things cannot be changed, while tolerating uncertainty. In addition, Van Breda (2016) argues that when current life circumstances are bleak, the positive belief that the future will be better, instils hope, which is a driver of resilience. Therefore, hope enhances family resilience.

### **2.4.1.3 Transcendence/Spirituality**

Transcendent beliefs and practices are larger societal values which provide meaning and purpose beyond an individual and family's immediate plight. Most families seek strengths, comfort and guidance in troubled times through connections with their cultural and spiritual traditions, especially those facing barriers of poverty, unemployment and discriminations. A South African study by Isaacs et al., (2017) found daily religious and spiritual practices enhancing beliefs that protect families from the negative effects of exposure to violence. Consistent with Isaacs et al. (2017), Izaks et al. (2017) found families in the Gouda community in the Western Cape Province using spiritual strengths and prayers to cope with the negative effects of unemployment.

Spiritual resources, through deep faith, practices such as prayer and meditation, and congregation involvement, have been found to be wellsprings of resilience (Walsh, 1998). Rituals and ceremonies facilitate passage through significant transitions and linkage with the larger community and common heritage. However, others found spiritual nourishment, outside formal religion, having deep connections with nature, creative expression, aspirations and social activism. A study by Raniga and Mthembu (2017) found spiritual beliefs pertain to rituals as the major predictor of resilience and later positive life adaptation in a sample of working and non-working mothers. Similarly, Van Breda (2016) also found traditional spirituality and practices as the source of resilience in low- and middle-income communities. These findings broaden our understanding of the positive effects family spiritual undertaking has in finding comfort, coping, purpose, and bright future.

### **2.4.2 Family Organisational Patterns**

Families with diverse structures and resources organise their households and relational networks in various ways to function optimally and meet life challenges. Each family adapts to meet new challenges and constructing a new normal life. Isaacs et al. (2017) assert that organisational patterns are stipulated by the leader of the family who enforces rules and provides structure, as well as what Walsh (2003a) refers to as a 'holding' or 'containing' environment for children. Resilience is strengthened by flexible structures, connectedness and social and economic resources.

#### **2.4.2.1 Flexibility**

Flexibility is the core process in resilience, and involves openness to adaptive change to meet new challenges. A family that is adaptive to change can easily navigate its way to resources and processes which translate into a resilient state. To maintain stability successfully, Walsh (1993) argues that families need to balance cohesion and conflict, maintain bonds and reach consensus about values and roles. In this context, a family reorganises itself against the current adversity for continuity, predictability and dependability. Families' buffers and counterbalances disruptive changes with an effort to restore stability.

A strong authoritative leadership emerges whereby family nurtures, guides and protects its members during stressful situations. For example, this leadership style is mostly effective for family functioning and the well-being of children. A research study by Theron and Phasha (2015) on cultural pathways to resilience found many families in South African cultures using an authoritarian style, especially when faced with challenges. These families conform to the authoritarian command as a guiding principle in respect of their cultural values and beliefs.

#### **2.4.2.2 Connectedness**

Connectedness is essential for relational resilience. A prolonged crisis situation can disrupt family cohesion, leaving members unable to rely on each other. Resilience is therefore strengthened through mutual support, teamwork and commitment to alleviate adverse situations together (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993). In this regard, it is also essential for family members to respect individual needs, differences and boundaries. Patterson (2002b) argues that the balance between closeness and distance remains important in order for cohesiveness to act as a protective factor. Families recognise that adversity is not an individual issue, but a shared issue requiring a cooperative and collective response in order to foster resilience (Mosavel et al., 2015). Most families often pursue reconnections and reconciliations after going through challenging situations with the aim to repair grievances. Some sustain connections through memories in photos, phone calls and the internet by interactions in order to strengthen cohesion within the family.

#### **2.4.2.3 Kin, Social Support, Economic Resources**

Relational bonds are good for families' well-being and resilience. Mobilising extended kin, and social and community networks enhances resilience. Families are able to

assist each other through ties and economic resources by maintaining relations and extended networks with their communities and larger social institutions (Walsh, 1993). For example, a South African study by Izaks et al. (2017) found seasonal unemployed families surviving through the emotional support from the external family, social grants from government and the community members. They build financial security and navigate stressful work and/or family challenges together.

A different study by Isaacs et al. (2018) found families to be using social connections and involvement in the community as a sense of security and belonging. Even children were found to be likelier to reach their full potential when the social and economic resources are made available to them (Roman et al., 2016). Families are therefore able to transact with larger systems with the intention to access institutional and structural support. In the South African context, many cultures apply the principle of “*ubuntu*” (Mapaure, 2011), which translates to being mutually responsive to one another’s needs, especially in time of adversity. To further understand the indigenous term “*ubuntu*”, Metz (2011) and Mkhize (2008) assert that it highlights the commonality, sharing and interdependence of members of the community, whereby a person is a person through other people. Sarra and Berman (2017) found “*ubuntu*” beyond family levels to be a tool for resilience in micro- and small businesses, which advance greater economic outcomes and sustainability. In essence, a high level of family resilience is associated with the greater use of external resources.

### **2.4.3 Communication/Problem-Solving Processes**

The communication process facilitates resilience by bringing informational clarity to crisis situations. Communication has been argued to have strong ties to faith structures as a tool used to overcome challenges faced by families (Isaacs et al., 2018). It also encourages open emotional sharing and fosters collaborative problem-solving and preparedness to deal with future adversities.

#### **2.4.3.1 Clear Information**

In stressful conditions, uncertainty arises and communication may easily break down. It is critical for families to engage through clear and consistent messages to facilitate effective family functioning (Walsh, 2003a). When families clarify and share crucial information about their adverse situation and future expectations, it facilitates meaning-making, informed

decision-making and future planning. Everyone in the family gets to understand the direction they as a family unit should embark upon in dealing with the current adversity.

#### **2.4.3.2 Emotional Sharing**

Open emotional sharing, like open communication, supported by a climate of mutual trust, empathy and tolerance for differences, enables a family to share a wide range of feelings (Patterson, 2002a; Walsh, 2016b). When family members' emotions are intense, conflict can erupt and get out of control. Family members should be able to share painful feelings such as sadness, suffering, anger and fear with the aim to find an amicable way forward.

The emotional sharing, even outside the family system, was found to be a key in enhancing resilience. For example, Jefferis and Theron (2017) in their study promoting resilience among Sesotho-speaking adolescents in the Free State, found teachers to be key social-ecological stakeholders at schools, facilitating resilience through their pastoral roles. This includes adolescents sharing emotions with their teachers at schools while teachers listen and provide guidance by inspiring hope for a better future and initiating supportive partnerships. Having being able to go through painful feelings, families are therefore able to engage in positive interactions, such as sharing love, appreciation, respect and humour.

#### **2.4.3.3 Collaborative Problem-Solving**

Families expand their resourcefulness for surmounting adversity through brainstorming of ideas. Shared decision-making and conflict management involve negotiation of differences with fairness and reciprocity over time (Lucas & Buzzanell, 2012). Family members are therefore able to collaboratively repair conflicts and negotiate peace in fairness. They focus on goals and concentrate on concrete steps to follow in meeting future challenges. Walsh (2003a) asserts that families collaboratively build on success and learn from setbacks by taking a proactive stance. Therefore, they will now engage in a planning and prevention strategies to deal with current and future adversities.

### **2.5 Risk Factors Affecting Unemployment**

The aim of this study was to explore and describe how unemployed family members cope and function within the constituent of resilience. In family resilience research, risks and

protective factors play an interactive role, which implies that it is not possible to talk about family resilience in the absence of significant risk. Consistent with the assertions, Walsh (2016b) argues that family resilience is forged through adversity. Therefore, this study regards unemployment as a risk factor affecting families' functioning and well-being.

Various research studies highlighted the negative impact of unemployment on a family system, indicating that unemployment poses an immediate threat to the well-being and well-functioning of families (Izaks et al., 2017; Roman et al., 2016; Theron & Phasha, 2015). More specifically, it is the financial hardships (Bisschoff et al., 2019), deprivation of resources (Makiwane et al., 2017), high stress levels (Victor, 2016), and family conflict and disruption of family plans (Khumalo et al., 2012), which mainly contribute towards non-optimal functioning of the family system.

In accordance with these findings, Mtembu and Govender (2015) found that unemployment leads to high levels of marital instability and domestic violence. In KwaZulu Natal, a research study conducted by Mzizi (2017) exploring how families cope with unemployment, found that unemployment affects interpersonal dynamics negatively in areas such as communication, satisfaction and companionship. This implies that families are challenged and disconnect as they are unable to produce an environment conducive for its members to deal with the adverse situations.

South African research conducted within the framework of positive psychology indicates that unemployment and the loss of regular income affect the well-being negatively in many ways (Mahlangu, 2015). During periods of unemployment, apart from mainly monetary matters, numerous additional problems affect their quality of life. Studies have shown that the children of parents who experience financial hardships are adversely affected by the scarce provision of basic needs. This means that these children have to face difficulties such as hunger, frequent moves, living with relatives and a lack of adequate health care. Most children who are living in unemployed households are particularly vulnerable to neglect and abuse, as a result of their parents' (or primary caregivers') regular experiences of distress and high levels of frustration

Another research study by Isaacs et al. (2017) on rural communities in South Africa, found families experiencing resource constraints, such as financial and social means, communication and connectedness negatively affecting family functioning and resilience. In the South African context, the majority of rural communities are inundated with a high unemployment rate. Statistics South Africa (2019) asserts that the unemployment rate is higher in rural areas than in township areas. Similarly to rural areas, the City of Johannesburg



is inundated with informal settlements where residents are faced with various challenges, including unemployment (City of Johannesburg, 2019).

Unemployment is a serious issue, posing a threat to the well-being of many South African citizens. Du Toit et al. (2018) assert that employment, as opposed to unemployment, contributes positively towards mental well-being and the building of psychological capital. This implies that people who are employed experience a sense of meaning and purpose that supports their overall well-being. In contrast, Giuntoli et al. (2011) found that unemployed individuals have a potential of not returning to their original life-satisfaction baseline, even many years after regaining employment. This notion indicates the level of crisis which unemployment has on families.

Research findings imply that unemployment has negative effects on families, which pose a significant risk to family functioning and well-being (Patterson, 2002b; Walsh, 2012). This study therefore adopts unemployment as a risk factor.

For the purpose of this study, family resilience was explored in the context of families facing the adverse effects of unemployment. A broader understanding of unemployment is further discussed in the next section.

## **2.6 Understanding Unemployment within the South African Context**

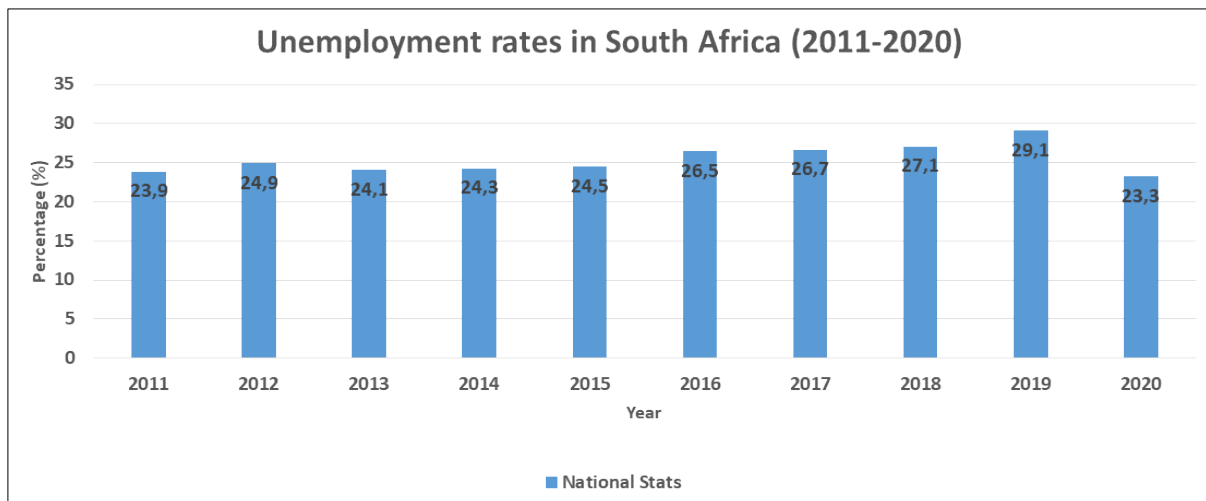
### **2.6.1 *The State of Unemployment in South Africa***

Unemployment refers to people between the ages of 15 and 64 years who are able and available to work, but without the opportunity to do so (Statistics South Africa, 2019). Statistics South Africa (2019) indicates, in the last quarter of 2019, that the South African unemployment rate is 30.1%, which implies that many individuals and families are facing adversity in this regard. Statistics South Africa (2020) further indicates that the highest unemployment rates were found in the Eastern Cape (37,4%), while Limpopo (18,5%) has the lowest unemployment rate. According to Statistics South Africa's (2020) Second Quarter Labour Force Survey, the decline in unemployment rate does not equate to improved economic activity, but rather to its definition. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in many countries, including South Africa, imposing national lockdowns, which imply that people were not looking for jobs or were not economically active as they were largely confined to their homes. Apart from those described as essential service workers, such as security clusters, medical practitioners, food and pharmaceutical workers as described in the National Disaster Management Act, 57 of 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2020), there were limited

opportunities for the unemployed to seek gainful employment. The fact of the matter is that many people have lost their jobs as a result of the imposed national lockdown, and many companies have closed down.

### Graph 1

*Unemployment Rates over a Decade (Statistics South Africa, 2020)*



The current state of unemployment in South Africa is far from being desirable, considering the negative impact it has on individuals and families. The unemployment figures have been increasing over the past decade (Graph 1). Ebrahim et al. (2017) argue that unemployment is a national crisis which, like poverty and inequality, feeds socio-economic challenges despite successfully enforcing labour and tax regulations in the country. The South African National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 goal envisaged to reduce unemployment rates to 14% by 2020 and to 6% by 2030 (Department of Labour, 2019); however, the current projections have worsened. On the other hand, Makaringe and Khobai (2018) assert that our economy lacks investor confidence as a result of social and political instability and the perceived level of corruption. These risks pose a threat and affect property rights and return on investments. Therefore, without people willing to invest in our country, it is almost impossible to generate new jobs.

The South African labour market is also faced by a highly regulated and labour standards, as well as bargained arbitration decisions by unions (Magruder, 2012). South African labour legislation is far too strict for a country with this type of unemployment climate. The economy's lack of flexibility is actually exacerbating unemployment and inequality in economic circles (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016).

Studies shows that government policies have largely been unsuccessful in this regard, as poverty and unemployment are on the rise, while inequality continues to be widespread (Du Toit et al., 2018; Makaringe & Khobai, 2018; Mtembu & Govender, 2015). Policies have not delivered on their intentions, and government needs to increase the employment intensity of the economy by reducing the skill mismatch (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016). It is apparent that there has not been one best policy to address unemployment in South Africa. For this reason, the relationship between unemployment and economic growth should be determined by the labour market structure and framework such as education, skills development, industrial and labour market policy, as well as black empowerment to stimulate high levels of growth and employment (Department of Trade & Industry, 2014).

Presently, the Covid-19 pandemic (World Health Organization, 2020) exacerbated the already struggling economy by affecting the unemployment rate. On 28 October 2020, Finance Minister Tito Mboweni outlined the economic reconstruction and recovery plan in his Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) to parliament, which is believed will expedite the recovery of South African economy, which is deeply affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The plan aims to create 800 000 jobs through infrastructure development and mass employment programmes and reindustrialise the economy (National Treasury, 2020). It thus implies an urgent need to turn the South African economy around as it is currently faced with many challenges.

### ***2.6.2 Causes and Effects of Unemployment***

Unemployment has been a thorny issue globally as it is linked with the economic performance and international trade relations. In the South African context, it has been a reality even before the democratic dispensation. Unemployment has been a socio-economic challenge associated with economic and social challenges which arguably reduce economic welfare, its output and erodes human capital (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). These challenges make unemployment one of the high priorities in South Africa. Literature has highlighted the causes and effects of unemployment within the South African context.

Several studies highlighted the historical factors as contributors towards the ailing economy and the current high unemployment rate (Du Toit et al., 2018; Magruder, 2012; Makaringe & Khobai, 2018; Plagerson et al., 2019), for example, the legacy of apartheid and poor education and training for designated groups. According to Ferreira and Rossouw (2016), before 1994, the state policies were used to remove black people from cities and to

prevent them from acquiring skills and getting high status occupations. As a result, the majority of people were unskilled and employed in numbers for low level occupations.

In addition, other underlying factors relate to labour demand and supply (Ebrahim et al., 2017). There was an over-supply of cheap labour, which benefitted businesses, particularly in the industrial, agricultural and mining sectors. Over time, these three sectors have been the major contributing factors to the South African economic growth and employment (Statistics South Africa, 2019). When these sectors are negatively challenged, production suffers and more workers are purged from the working environment.

The other factor contributing to the high unemployment rate relates to the high increase in youth participation in the labour force since 1994. There is a considerable number of youth entering the job market as compared to previous years. The number of youth, due to accessibility to higher learning institutions, has doubled with less job opportunities since 1994 (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015; Statistics South Africa, 2019). Similar to these findings, the Department of Labour (2019) also found the slow economic growth over the past years to have had an effect in the net rate at which people enter the labour market. The number of people used to enter the labour market significantly exceeds the number of jobs created. As a result, businesses cut costs through retrenchments while others close down completely. Other business sectors evolve over time and with technological innovations that affect the unskilled workers who were previously over-supplied. This led to the skills and supply mismatch in the labour force (Statistics South Africa, 2019). In this context, the service sector embarked substantially on employing highly skilled people.

More global economic meltdown was exacerbated by the global recession. As noted in Du Toit et al. (2018), the 2008/2009 global recession had a major knock-on effect on the South African economy. During this period, the global recession affected many sectors and witnessed the unemployment rate of 22.9 % in the first quarter of 2008 increase to 25,2 % in 2010 (Statistics South Africa, 2014). It is unfortunate that our economy has not been resilient and resulted in a decline of job creation and opportunities, as most small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) closed down (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). This implies that many people have lost their jobs and this has affected their social capital and lifestyles significantly.

In another study, Plagerson et al. (2019) found rigidity in the labour market, high reservation wages, barriers of entry to the informal sector, skills mismatch and employment discrimination as the main causes of unemployment in South Africa. Consistent with these findings, Magruder (2012) asserts that the South African labour market is highly regulated with a variety of legislated labour standards, as well as bargained arbitration decisions by

unions. It thus implies that South African labour legislation is far too strict for a country with this type of unemployment climate. The legislation seems to lack flexibility, as laws are found to exacerbate unemployment and inequality in economic circles (Mahlangu, 2015). Affirmative policies may have had a greater effect on the nature of employment available amongst various racial groups.

The role of trade union federations in government and the high wage demands have a knock-on effect on businesses, which alternatively contributed to the high unemployment rate (Makaringe & Khobai, 2018). Political interferences within the state-owned entities and in governmental processes have indeed affected the absorption of people in the labour market. This has also discouraged a general interest in entrepreneurship which could be as a result of minimal governmental support for SMMEs (Du Toit et al., 2018).

The causes of unemployment, as discussed above, have significantly positioned unemployment as a risk factor affecting many individuals and families. Over and above social and economic effects, unemployment also affects individuals and families' psychological well-being in a negative way. Firstly, Yamben and Asaah's (2020) study on the effects of unemployment on health in Sub-Saharan Africa, found an increased hostility, anxiety, depression, fear, anger, stress, loneliness, loss of self-esteem, and life satisfaction in unemployed individuals as compared to the employed counterparts. Furthermore, families of those unemployed individuals were characterised by increases in family conflicts, marital friction or spousal abuse, as well as child abuse. It is, however, not clear whether unemployed individuals were contributing to family challenges, or unemployment as a risk was the contributing factor. However, unemployment is previously argued to affect families functioning and the well-being of its members.

Secondly, many families tend to accede to drug abuse in order to temporarily cope with the adverse effects of unemployment. For example, Kheswa's (2017) study on the impact of unemployment in rural villages of the Eastern Cape found unemployed male youth hopeless and lacking purpose and resorting to the use of drugs and alcohol as a way of keeping productive. This happens typically when people have sufficient time on their hands with less job opportunities and inadequate recreational facilities in the area. In addition, Nduna and Jewkes (2012) assert their findings relating to disempowerment and psychological distress of unemployed families. Their findings revealed that families feel they are being treated poorly in the community as a result of being unemployed. This is indicative that unemployed families evaluate themselves as occupying lower status among peers, with a

perception that augmented their misfortune. Therefore, members of those families are likely to feel emotionally neglected.

In another study by Graham and Mlatsheni (2015), the prolonged effects of unemployment and negative labour market experiences were found to have led to decreased self-esteem, depression as well as discouragement. It is notable that the effects of unemployment bear a negative result as it disempowers and reduces the psychological well-being of individuals and families. Therefore, these negative economic, social and psychological effects of unemployment necessitate policy-makers to draw flexible policies that would reduce the adverse and growing unemployment rates.

### ***2.6.3 Government Interventions on Unemployment***

Policy plays a pivotal role in guiding the implementation and putting measures in place to change the current unemployment status. The South African government has over the past two decades implemented several policies in pursuit of the rising unemployment rate. At first, the South African government launched the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994, followed by Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1996 aiming at producing an annual economic growth of 4.2 % and creating 400 000 new job opportunities (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016). That did not happen, due to the effect of monetary policy on inflation, which directly affected the price of labour, and therefore unemployment (Michuillat & Saez, 2018). It is also critical to note that monetary policy by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) is described by an interest-rate rule that describes how monetary policy responds to inflation and unemployment.

Consequently, in 1998, the South African government introduced the National Skills Development Act, 97 of 1998, which was later in 2013 amended to the Skills Development Amendment Act, 31 of 2013 (Republic of South Africa, 2013). According to this act, the Sector Education Training Authority (SETAs) were created which charged skills levies on firms to be repaid on the production of evidence by the firm that it is undertaking approved training for workers (Republic of South Africa, 2013). This was not sufficient to address the entrenched and intertwined legacies of unemployment and poverty. Similar to the National Skills Development Act, 31 of 2013, the government introduced the Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges' after 1994 to enhance skills gaps required in the job market. However, the skills mismatch is still a challenge, especially within the banking sectors (Amina et al., 2017).

The government therefore implemented the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA) in 2006 to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014 and achieve 6% annual growth rate by 2010 (Du Toit et al., 2018). Subsequently, the New Growth Path (NGP) was introduced in 2010 as a successor to AsgiSA in order to respond to the 2008/9 global economic crisis. NGP aimed to create 5 million jobs by 2020 in infrastructure development, manufacturing, mining value chain, agriculture, tourism and the green economy (Mtembu & Govender, 2015).

Despite the government's efforts in policy implementation, a new policy called Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) was introduced subsequent to the failing NGP. This policy was developed mainly to force private sectors to employ a considerable number of previously disadvantaged people on all hierarchy levels to create more jobs (Plagerson et al., 2019). The policy also failed to address the high unemployment rates.

Another policy was established in 2005 to manage social security programmes referred to as the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) (Department of Social Development, 2005). Its primary role is to facilitate social grants to the elderly, people living with disabilities, foster care and child grants. This programme aims at vulnerable sections of the population, excluding unemployed able bodies.

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) (Makaringe & Khobai, 2018) is another policy introduced to address high unemployment rates. It aimed to potentially employ a large number of poorly educated and otherwise unemployed workers. However, training is not its primary focus; it is effective for under-developed informal sectors which are temporary job creations and not sustainable (Makaringe & Khobai, 2018). Ferreira and Rossouw (2016) argue that public employment programmes, such as the EPWP, operate at a small scale relative to the unemployment challenges; it is a twice per week employment programme which amounts to eight days per month.

Furthermore, the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP) (Oluwajodu et al., 2015) was adopted in 2013, which sets out the government's broad approach to industrialisation. Its aim was to promote more labour absorbing industrialisation which will help creating and contributing to sustainable industrial development (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016). A year later, the government launched the Employment Tax Incentive policy (ETI) (Du Toit et al., 2018) aimed at addressing low youth absorption into the labour force by reducing the cost of hiring young workers. During that time, the years 2013 and 2014, the youth unemployment rate was 58% of the national unemployment rates (Statistics South Africa, 2014). In addressing the

excessive unemployment figures, government ought to give firms a tax credit which reduces the risk when hiring individuals between the ages of 18 and 29 years. Michuillat and Saez (2018) assert that the ETI policy aimed at subsidising 423 000 youth jobs and creating 178 000 new youth jobs over three years to the value of R5 billion.

Nevertheless, it has not been clear whether the policies were ineffective in implementation or there were other external factors contributing to the poor economy and high unemployment rates. However, previous policies made little impact in addressing the rising unemployment, and more focused policies are still required. This is evident enough as South Africa is one of the countries with the highest unemployment rate in the world (International Labour Office, 2015). In this instance, Du Toit et al. (2018) suggest that a long-term strategy should be the aligning of the school educational system with the demands of the labour force. On the other hand, Makaringe and Khobai (2018) suggest that unemployment relief policies should seek to alleviate the psychological burden of children and especially adolescents whose parents are jobless. This is indicative that there is still a wide gap in terms of collaboration amongst various sectors in improving the employment rate. This issue of unemployment cannot be a government problem alone.

In conclusion, the literature has indicated that there are no clear and immediate solutions to address the unemployment problem, considering the little contribution made by government policies over the past years. There is, however, a need for a dynamic and inclusive economy that integrates all factors, local and township economy. An exceptional leadership from multiple constituencies in the society is long overdue. Lastly, unemployment and economic growth cannot be addressed by government alone, but needs a collaborative effort from social partners to work on a sustainable solution. Theron and Phasha (2015) argue that while it is clear that many families are unemployed in South Africa, it is unclear what family members are in fact doing to survive. The aim of the present study was therefore to explore and describe the resilience, in particular, optimal functioning and coping mechanisms from families affected by unemployment, from the perspective of The Family Resilience Theory (Walsh, 1996).

## **2.7 Families' Resilience in the South African Context**

### ***2.7.1 Families' Protective Processes***

The key to understanding family resilience is through the identification of protective factors and the processes that moderate the relationship between a family's exposure to



significant risk and the ability to show competence in accomplishing optimal family functioning (Patterson, 2002a). In relation to the current study, exploring and describing family resilience in the face of unemployment within the South African context remain scarce. However, there is a wide range of research on family resilience and coping within other contexts such as in low-economic income communities. While there is growing evidence of the importance of family resilience (Raniga & Mthembu, 2017), there is relatively little documented evidence of how families function and cope with the ailments of unemployment in the South African context.

A South African study by Mampane (2014) argues that unemployment is a threat to family functioning, considering the negative impact it has on family members. Consistent with Mampane's (2014) findings, Walsh (2016a) asserts that economic instability can influence family functioning and affect the level of family resilience. Despite the adversity, Mampane (2014) found families from low-economic communities strengthening their relations by openly sharing feelings and emotions which are predictors of fostering positive coping. These findings are consistent with those of Steinert et al, (2018) who found peer effects and social norms enhancing resilience in the sense that peers' share information, moral support and shaping of social norms in the face of adverse situations.

Mahlangu (2015) explored resilience processes employed by families from low socio-economic background in South Africa, and found families using social support and assistance from extended family member to cope with the adverse situation. This is consistent with Walsh's (2003a) FRF, specifically family organisational processes, where family members use kinships, social supports and economic resources to cope with adverse situations. Furthermore, Bond and Van Breda (2018) conducted a study on care-leavers and found them, despite being unemployed, having the ability through family relationship networks to access and maximise the utility of resources and opportunities in order to survive. It is thus important to note that trustworthy, kind and competent role models have the potential to create positive self that contributes towards the development of resilience. In addition, Malekutu (2014) has investigated the survival strategies of unemployed women in rural areas of Limpopo and found many women surviving through social welfare grants, gambling and informal trading. These external sources were found to enhance family resilience, as families cope by tapping into the kin, social and economic resources.

Isaacs et al. (2018) have adapted and validated the Family Resilience Assessment Scale in an Afrikaans rural community in South Africa and found communication to be the underlying component of all domains of family resilience. Similarly, in a different study,

Roman et al. (2016) found communication as a strong predictor of family adaptation, as it enhances problem-solving abilities during a family crisis. In line with these findings, Lewis (2018) argues that consistent parenting with clear communication between children and parents serves as a protective factor for children across cultures, mainly because it nurtures and creates a responsive environment. These assertions are supported by Mampane (2014) that families are able to foster meaning and informed decisions when there is clear information regarding the adverse situation.

A research study on family functioning, life satisfaction and happiness in South African households by Botha and Booysen (2014) found greater levels of attachment and changeability positively related to optimal family functioning. These constructs relate to what Walsh (2003b) refers to as connectedness and flexibility. In this sense, families are able to collaboratively reconnect and adapt to new challenges as they emerge. Furthermore, Mahlangu (2015) found families from low socio-economic background collaboratively joining together by restructuring their roles in an effort to forge strengths. These efforts indicate the level of connectedness and flexibility within the said families. How close family members are to each other and the degree of flexibility within the family bring about family organisational processes which is one of Walsh's (2003a) key factors of family resilience.

In a different context, a study by Isaacs et al. (2017) found belief systems to be the most relied upon dimension of family resilience by most families when faced with economic challenges. In their study, they explored the family resilience needs of a rural community from West Coast of South Africa, and participants were scoring high in the dimension - belief systems. This implies that families have strong ties with their faith, churches, and spiritual denominations as they hope for change. Consistent with the findings, Steinert et al. (2018) have noted a greater improvement in family members' optimism and future orientation during short plays and storytelling sessions. It thus signifies that families have hope that the present challenges will soon be over and they will be able to live and love again.

Consequently, a study by Von Backstrom (2015) exploring family functioning from family resilience perspective, found families depending on Walsh's three domains of FRF to cope with variety of adversities and stressful conditions. In particular, those dealing with ongoing job loss have proactively nurtured an extended support, collaborative and selective communication climate (Beck, 2016).

Vermeulen and Greeff's (2015) study on family resilience resources in coping with child sexual abuse in South Africa found that family resilience can be an empowering, strengthening factor in helping the child and family to cope with child sexual abuse. These

findings suggest that the resources that families tap into assist its members to cope better with stressful situations.

In summary, family resilience in South Africa has received the necessary attention and research has been conducted within a variety of contexts. However, little attention has been given to the context of unemployment as it is argued to affect the families' functioning and well-being negatively. This qualitative study is a stepping stone to many other studies of family resilience in the face of unemployment. The current research on family resilience within various contexts highlights that families can, despite adversity and risk, thrive through tapping into key processes as outlined in the FRF (Walsh, 2003b).

## **2.8 Conclusion**

A growing body of research has expanded our knowledge on the construct resilience and how it was attributed over the past few decades. Despite some differences in research methodology and constructs, there is remarkable consistency in findings across studies relating to relational processes as essential to enhancing family functioning and resilience. It was also highlighted that resilience is, to a greater extent, the repertoire of resources and assets that family members can draw on to optimally function and cope in the face of risks and adverse situations. This is a result of changes within the wider socio-economic and socio-cultural systems that create difficulties for families to have long lasting effects.

Therefore, the family resilience perspective enhances our understanding of family functioning and is viewed as being within varying structures over time in the context of adversity. It is significant to note that the family resilience perspective views all families as having the potential for growth through adversity, as they make adjustments and take collaborative stances despite adversity (Walsh, 1996). In this study, Walsh's (1996) Family Resilience perspective plays a central role as a theoretical lens to explore how families' function and cope despite the adverse situation of unemployment.

## **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I present a detailed description of how the current study was conducted by looking at the selected methodological approach and research design. Detailed procedures on the participants' selection process and protocol as well as participants' demographics are presented, followed by a description of the method used to collect data. Thereafter, I present the rationale behind using thematic analysis, as well as the process of using the method deductively. The trustworthiness of the study is also presented according to principles as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985). The chapter concludes with the ethical considerations that were adhered to in ensuring safety and standards throughout the data collection and analysis phases.

### **3.2 Research Method**

#### ***3.2.1 Research Paradigm***

A qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2014) was undertaken to fulfil the aim of the present study. This approach was regarded as a relevant tool because of its ability to allow a grasp of the individual's own explanation of behaviour and attitude. Qualitative approach is known to enhance the researcher's understanding of how participants make sense of their situations and how it influences their behaviour (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, it tries to understand phenomena in their natural context, as opposed to a controlled environment, which is more characteristic of quantitative studies.

The choice between the use of qualitative and quantitative methods is mainly based on a trade-off between depth and breadth. Creswell (2014) asserts that the qualitative research allows the in-depth exploration of a phenomenon. In this regard, the qualitative methods have the advantage of allowing participants to express what is really important to them in their own points of views. Research on family resilience in the face of unemployment using qualitative methods may provide new insights, allowing a better understanding of family coping and functioning in the face of this adversity.

### **3.2.2 Research Design**

This present study adopted a multiple case study design to explore perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment. Creswell (2014, p. 97) describes a case study as a method that “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case themes”. Because unemployment is a complex issue that affects families negatively in various ways (Lewis, 2018; Raniga & Mthembu, 2017), the qualitative case study design as described by Yin (2018) was employed to explore resilience, in particular, optimal functioning and coping mechanisms from families affected by unemployment.

A multiple case study was deemed a good fit because it offered the exploration of different perspectives on family resilience (Walsh, 1996), but the case could not be considered without the context, being unemployment. This design furthermore enabled the researcher to explore the differences within and between cases in order to integrate and compare findings across cases, and closely examine the data within a specific context. By replicating the case through pattern matching, a technique linking several pieces of information from the same case to some theoretical proposition (Anderson et al., 2014), multiple case study design aimed to enhance and support the results between and across cases. Therefore, trustworthiness is increased as data gathering procedures are repeated for each case (Yin, 2018).

In summary, the method opted for this study was instrumental in nature and used multiple specified cases to better understand coping strategies of unemployed family members within the City of Johannesburg areas. Therefore, this study was primarily exploratory and sought to gain insight into a specific social construct, namely families coping and functioning in the face of unemployment.

## **3.3 Procedure**

### **3.3.1 Participant Selection**

Below follows a process undertaken in selecting participants for this study.

### 3.3.1.1 Method

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling (Creswell, 2014), implying that participants were selected based on key variables, which meet the needs of the study. Etikan et al. (2016) argue that the idea behind purposive sampling is to concentrate on people with particular characteristics who will better be able to assist with the relevant research. In this instance, to obtain accurate results, only participants who were deemed as best informants of the study were considered.

At first, a non-probability sampling method, also referred to by Creswell (2014) as purposive sampling, was employed to recruit only participants that suit the purpose of the study. Etikan et al. (2016, p. 3) refer to this type of sampling as “homogeneous purposive sampling” as participants shared similar characteristics, as outlined in Section 3.3.1.2 of this report. In this sense, the first participant was recruited through advertising the study’s information leaflet (see Appendix B).

Participants were initially intended to be recruited from the City of Johannesburg’s ESP unemployment database as the custodian; however, this caught up with a legislative challenge despite being granted permission. The Protection of Personal Information Act (PoPIA), which prohibits public and private institutions/bodies against unlawful distribution or sharing of personal information, came into effect in the last quarter of 2019. This has made it difficult for the researcher to sample research participants from the databased population as initially intended.

In view of the above challenge and subsequent to the purposive sampling, a chain referral sampling technique was therefore employed to recruit participants, as the researcher was unable to access the unemployment database from the City of Johannesburg as previously arranged. According to Etikan et al. (2015), the chain referral method, also known as non-probability snowball sampling, refers to a sampling that allows participants to make estimates about the social networks connecting the hidden or hard-to-find population. However, the researcher still maintained control and ensured the inclusion criteria and/or eligibility of referred prospective participants. Consistent with Etikan et al. (2016), Cohen and Arieli (2011) assert that snowball sampling is commonly used to locate, access and involve people from specific populations in cases where the researcher anticipates difficulties in creating a representative sample of the population.

It is also important to note that there are populations which are not hidden but still hard to reach for research purposes, such as gangs and drug addicts. Similarly, unemployed

family members are hard to reach due to the stigma attached to unemployment, such as financial hardships, dependence and deprivation of resources (Mzizi, 2017). The snowball sampling enabled the researcher to reach hard-to-find participants through the assistance of participants within the same social networks. This implies that each recruited participant was then asked to make further referrals, initiating a process that is analogous to a snowball rolling down a slope (Cohen & Arieli, 2011). The snowball sampling was therefore considered the best feasible sampling technique, amid the difficulties in reaching representation from the desired population.

### **3.3.1.2 Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

All participants who took part in this study were residents from diverse areas within the City of Johannesburg. The City of Johannesburg is one of the three Metropolitan Municipalities in the Gauteng Province, comprising formal and informal settlements, industrial areas, businesses and farms. It covers 922 square meters of geographical area. It has an estimated population of 5,5 million residents (City of Johannesburg, 2019) and 3,7 million (Statistics South Africa, 2019) of them are eligible working population. The area is diverse in terms of culture. A number of people flock to the cities looking for employment and economic opportunities (Mahlangu, 2015).

Furthermore, participants had to meet the following criteria in order to participate in this study: (a) aged between 25 and 40 years, (b) unemployed for at least a minimum of six (6) months, (c) fluent in English, (d) regarded as a breadwinner or one of the key family providers. In this sense, gender and race were not used as criteria. In addition, educational levels or qualifications of the participants were not considered. Lastly, there were no limitations in terms of participants belonging to a household with or without children.

### **3.3.1.3 Process and Protocol**

All participants were met face-to-face at a location convenient to them with the aim to introduce the study. The purpose of the meeting was to present and provide detailed information regarding the present study. This included the aim of the study, the type of interview, the estimated time of the interview and the research methods. They were further informed that interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed later. Participants were

also provided with a copy of the information sheet and consent form and were requested to contact me later should they volunteer to participate.

During the introductory meeting, prospective participants were made aware of the ethical considerations pertaining to confidentiality and keeping data secure. In addition, they were made aware that participation is voluntary and there were no incentive or coercion used in recruiting them. Therefore, should they decide not to participate or withdraw from participation during the course of the study, they may do so without a reason and would not face any negative repercussions.

Not all contacted individuals responded; however, a considerable number responded positively and participated in the study. Participants were provided with contact details of the researcher and the supervisor for questions regarding the study, including information on how to obtain the final report.

### 3.3.2 *Research Participants*

Participants' demographical information relative to the present study is presented hereunder as Table 1.

**Table 1**  
*A Summary of Participants' Demographic Information*

Participants (pseudonyms)	Age	Gender	Race	Level of education	Length of unemployment	Total number of family members	Required psychosocial referral
Rethabile	25	Female	Black	Diploma	3-4 years	4 (including 1 child)	No
Grace	40	Female	Black	National Diploma	1 year 3 month	4 (including 3 children)	No - already on a programme
Mpho	33	Female	Black	National Diploma	4 - 5 years	2 (including 1 child)	No
Sipho	38	Male	Black	Grade 12	7 months	4 (including 2 children)	No
Rebecca	39	Female	Black	Grade 12	14 years	5 (including 4 children)	No
Lerato	30	Female	Black	Higher Certificate	5 years	5 (including 1 child)	No
Lydia	36	Female	Coloured	Grade 11	7 years	5 (including 3 children)	No
Mmaphutsi	36	Female	Coloured	Grade 11 (passed 3 subjects in Matric)	4 years	7 (including 4 children)	No - already on a programme
Thato	32	Female	Black	Grade 12 + Certificate	2 years	8 (including 3 children)	No



Table 1 illustrates a total of nine (9) participants, comprising eight (8) females and one (1) male, who were interviewed for the current study. All participants reside within the City of Johannesburg areas. Their ages ranged between 25 and 40 years. Seven (7) of the participants self-identified as Blacks and two (2) as Coloureds. Furthermore, all participants come from families with child(ren) dependents, some are married while others are never married single parents and living with siblings. The minimum level of education is Grade 11, with the National Diploma as the highest. All participants were experiencing unemployment in the first round of interview at least for a minimum of seven (7) months and 14 years as a maximum. Only two (2) participants were successfully employed during the second round of interviews, although it is on a casual basis. None of the participants required a psychosocial and/or emotional support referral system. However, two (2) participants were already on the psychosocial programme with the City of Johannesburg's Social Workers and Tembisa Public/Tertiary Hospital respectively.

### **3.3.3 Data Collection**

This study employed semi-structured interviews to collect data from nine (9) breadwinners or key family providers who were unemployed for at least a minimum of six (6) months. Each participant had two (2) interviews which were four (4) months apart. Maxwell (2018) argues that data is usefully seen not simply as 'texts' to be interpreted, or as the 'constructions' of participants, but as evidence for real phenomena and processes. The semi-structured method was thus employed to enable the extraction and interpretation of the phenomenon family resilience in the face of unemployment.

#### **3.3.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews refer to self-report measures through which participants report on their own subjective experiences of the phenomenon under study (Roulston & Choi, 2018). For example, if the interviewee has difficulty answering a question or provides only a brief response, the interviewer can use cues or prompts to encourage the interviewee to consider the question further. Furthermore, and according to Maxwell (2018), semi-structured interviews are the most commonly used method of data collection in qualitative psychology research, as the data can be analysed in various ways and are compatible with many different

methods of data analysis. Semi-structured interviews are ideally suited to exploratory research, as they allow the researcher to explore the participants' responses in detail and discover new aspects of a specific research problem (Creswell, 2014).

In order to respond effectively to the study's research question(s) as outlined in Chapter 1, semi-structured interviews were employed to collect data from nine (9) participants. Each participant was interviewed twice and 18 interview datasets were held in total. The two (2) interviews were four (4) months apart, which allowed participants the opportunity to reflect on their situations. This method provided the interviewer with an opportunity to probe in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill et al., 2008). These interviews were crucial in eliciting information from the participants' lived experiences, which gave a perspective on family resilience in the face of unemployment.

### **3.3.3.2 Data Collection Procedure**

Upon receipt of ethical clearance from the University of the Free State General Human Research Ethics Committee (UFS-HSD2019/1463/1103) (see Annexure F), the researcher commenced with the process of data collection. Care was taken in applying the needed ethical requirements pertaining to the research procedure, such as informing participants that participation was voluntary, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience. The underlying issues related to confidentiality and anonymity were also considered in the data collection process.

The researcher obtained individually signed consent forms from participants and scheduled the interview dates at locations convenient to each and every participant. An interview schedule consisted of nine (9) biographical questions and 10 broad questions focusing on family coping and functioning, as well as how the unemployment status figured in the family. For example, participants were asked questions such as "describe your family's experiences of being unemployed" and "how do you resolve issues as a family when confronted with conflicts or disagreements?". Semi-structured interviews with nine (9) participants took place during the period of May 2020 to September 2020. Each participant had two (2) semi-structured interviews conducted four (4) months apart to allow reflection. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed afterwards. The first and the second round of interviews culminated in a total of 63 transcribed pages and 200 minutes and 4 seconds of recorded audio.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

#### **3.4.1 Rationale for Using Thematic Analysis**

There are multiple and different approaches to qualitative research analysis, ranging from content analysis, narrative analysis, thematic analysis, interpretive phenomenological, to conversation and discourse analysis, amongst others (Creswell, 2014). For the present study, thematic analysis was deemed a suitable method to identify, analyse and report patterns within data. Thematic analysis has been chosen as a suitable technique to analyse data due to its flexibility, as it can be applied to various theoretical frameworks and is not restricted for use only within contexts that employ certain pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2019). According to Nowell et al. (2017), thematic analysis is a method of data analysis that can be used to identify, analyse and report recurring patterns within a dataset. This technique identifies the underlying meaning of themes through careful reading and re-reading of data. It further ensures a rich and detailed, yet complex, analysis of the data as it allows the researcher to make sense of collective experiences and meanings.

Thematic analysis can further be applied as inductive or deductive. In inductive thematic analysis, researchers use a series of empirical cases to identify a pattern from which to make a general statement (Creswell, 2014). Inductive logic consists of inferring categories or conclusions based upon data by sticking closely to the data and can reveal new understandings of existing knowledge and conclusions. In this sense, research is data-driven, as it bears little relation to the specific questions that were asked of the participants.

In contrast to inductive, deductive thematic analysis relates to data that is analysed according to an existing theoretical framework or prior research (Kennedy, 2018). For example, data is coded by fitting it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. The technique helps researchers to attend to aspects of the data prescribed by the philosophy of interest, whereby an interest is on the way permissiveness plays out across the data (Archer, 2018). One advantage of deducing from theory in qualitative research is that the theory helps researchers attend to details and nuances in the data that otherwise might be overlooked (Nowell et al., 2017).

This current study has adopted the use of both the inductive and deductive logic of thematic analysis. The application of both logics denotes what Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) and Swain (2018) refer to as hybrid approach to thematic analysis in qualitative research. This method incorporated both the data-driven inductive approach and the deductive coding manual approach in the thematic analysis process (Boyatzis, 1998; Crabtree

& Miller, 1999). In this sense, the Family Resilience Theory (Walsh, 1996) and the study's research question were integral to the process of deductive analysis while allowing themes to emerge directly from raw data through inductive coding. The aim was not to test the theory but to adopt the theory as an analytical tool or lens to explore and describe how unemployed family members cope and function within the constituent of resilience. Therefore, the theoretical framework was both the precursor to, and an outcome of, the data analysis process.

### ***3.4.2 The Process of Conducting Hybrid Thematic Analysis***

Subsequent to the data collection process, 18 audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document and the textual data was deductively analysed through a coding template approach, as outlined by Crabtree and Miller (1999). According to Archer (2018), coding provides a means of purposefully managing, locating, identifying, sifting, sorting, and querying data. The coding template or codebook created contained a list of codes, a code label for each code, a brief definition of it, a description of how to know when the theme occurs, and an example of a quote illustrating the code. This codebook became helpful during the analysis of the data (see Appendix E).

For the present study, a template of codes from a codebook was applied as a means of organising text for subsequent interpretation. In this sense, a template of codes was developed prior to the analysis process based on the research aim, questions and the theoretical framework. Reviewed literature provided much needed information regarding the, Family Resilience Theory as proposed by Walsh (1996), as understudy. Therefore, codes representing the identified themes were developed and linked to raw data by fitting into those predetermined codes as summary markers for later analysis.

There are six (6) stages of coding data outlined by Crabtree and Miller (1999), all of which were carried out during my analysis of data. First, I *developed the code manual* after familiarising myself with the study's research aim, questions and the theoretical concepts of Walsh's (1996) family resilience. King (2004) asserts that the code manual is important as it serves as a data management tool for organising segments of similar text to assist with interpretation. For example, nine (9) broad code categories formed the code manual, namely meaning-making, positive outlook, transcendence/spirituality, flexibility, connectedness, resources, clarity, emotional sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. Furthermore, the

codes were labelled and provided with a definition as well as a description of how to know when the theme occurs. An example is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*An Example of Codes Developed A Priori from the Template of Codes*

Code 1	
Label	Meaning-making
Definition	Making sense of a crisis or adverse situation and bestowing it with meaning
Description	When family members' subjective appraisal of their situation. Also, when they reorganise adversity as a challenge that is meaningful, comprehensible and manageable to address
Code 2	
Label	Positive outlook
Definition	The ability to regenerate hope from despair in order to see possibilities, by tapping into potential resources while striving to surmount obstacles
Description	Holding of positive illusions, encouraged, focusing on potential and affirmed strengths. A family that has hope, taking active initiatives and preservation by acknowledging that some of the things cannot be changed while tolerating uncertainty. Hope enhancement features.

The second stage is a crucial step in the development of a useful framework for analysis, which is to *test the reliability of the codes*. According to Boyatzis (1998), this step is essential to determine the applicability of the code to the raw information. To test the applicability of the codes, I searched for meanings and patterns in the interview transcripts by applying the priori codes and created a new series of a posteriori codes.

The third stage was to *summarise raw data and identify initial themes*. This stage involves what Braun and Clarke (2006) call familiarising oneself with raw data by re-reading the interview transcripts. Therefore, I have used this process as the first step to analyse raw data from the interview transcripts by inductively generating initial codes. This stage provided the opportunity to sense and identify potential themes from raw data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

In stage four, I have applied a *template of codes and additional coding* technique, as suggested by Crabtree and Miller (1999), to the transcripts or text with the intent to identify meaningful units of text. The codes developed for the manual were entered as nodes, and I coded the text by matching the codes with segments of data selected as representative of the code. The texts which were best representing the codes were copied from transcripts and

reserved on a Microsoft Word document for later application in Chapter 4. In this sense, all generated codes from raw data were fitted into the template of codes (Swain, 2018). The segments of text were then collated, and a process of data retrieval organised the codes by clustering them. Therefore, the analysis process was mainly guided by the pre-existing coding template of this study (Boyatzis, 1998).

*Connecting codes* was the fifth stage intended to discover themes and patterns in the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). For the present study, I have collapsed both the a priori and the a posteriori codes into family codes whereby nine (9) broad codes were connected, organised and clustered in order to identify themes. The clustering of codes culminated in three (3) main themes which were coded as family beliefs system, organisational patterns, and communication/problem-solving patterns.

The final stage was to *corroborate and legitimise coded themes*. In this stage, identified themes were further corroborated with raw data to confirm meaning and the findings (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This process was undertaken in relation to the study's research question and the theoretical framework. Themes were checked if indeed they accurately represented and/or reflected the essence and aspect of raw data. In this regard, I have revisited the collated data extracts for each theme, and organising them into a coherent and internally consistent manner (Braun & Clark, 2006).

Therefore, permissiveness played a role across the data, as thematic analysis was conducted deductively while allowing themes to emerge from raw data through inductive coding. The coding manual template provided guidance, whereas themes were fitted into a pre-existing coding frame to produce an in-depth analysis of the data. The hybrid thematic analysis thus provided an opportunity to explore and describe the resilience, in particular, optimal functioning and coping mechanisms from families affected by unemployment.

### **3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is described through demonstrating the integrity, competence and ethics within a study, especially during the data collection and analysis process. In ensuring rigour, this present study applied principles proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), known as credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. They introduced these concepts in qualitative research to fulfil the trustworthiness parallel to the conventional quantitative assessment criteria of validity, reliability, generalisability and objectivity. The four principles are discussed hereunder.

### **3.5.1 Credibility**

*Credibility* refers to the extent to which the conclusions of a study are an accurate reflection of the participants' views, which is an alternative to internal validity in quantitative research. This is intensified through demonstrating clear links between the data and the interpretations by honouring honesty and openness (Nowell et al., 2017). To address credibility, Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that data should be analysed by more than one researcher. In this instance, my analysis was reviewed by my supervisor to ensure that meaningful interpretations had been made and that the presentation of the results was clear.

Furthermore, each participant had two (2) interviews which were conducted four (4) months apart to allow for personal reflection. The second interview enabled a member checking process, what Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 84) call “respondent validation”, to test the preliminary findings and interpretations against raw data with the participants. Participants were also able to validate their initial responses and confirm the preliminary findings through a multiple case study cross-analysis and audit. This has assisted the researcher significantly to rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning and what participants articulated. It further helped the researcher to identify own biases and misunderstanding of what was initially gathered.

Rigour was also enhanced during the deductive thematic analysis, by providing a coding manual template. Crabtree and Miller (1999) argue that the use of a code manual is important because it serves as a data management tool for organising segments of similar or related text to assist in interpretation. Therefore, the use of a manual provided a clear trail of evidence for the credibility of the study.

### **3.5.2 Dependability**

*Dependability* refers to the consistency with which the research process was carried out over the course of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that dependability relies on the parameters that evidence should produce similar results if repeated with the same respondents under the same context. Dependability relates to reliability or the consistency of the results in quantitative research (Maxwell, 2018). To ensure dependability, I have clearly outlined the research process and procedure, in a logical and traceable way as documented in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this report. It includes the rationale for using two sampling strategies, data collection and interview protocols, transcription, as well as the deductive analysis process. Furthermore, data collection, analysis and theory were integrated and assessed

thoroughly in order to ensure repeatability should the same study be conducted in a similar context.

### **3.5.3 *Transferability***

*Transferability* provides an alternative to generalisability or what is known as external validity in quantitative research, referring to the degree to which the findings of a particular study can be reapplied to other similar contexts, or considered relevant to issues beyond its parameters (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). In qualitative research, this therefore relates only from case-to-case transfer considering the research design and the sampling methods utilised. This study targeted unemployed family members within the City of Johannesburg who meet certain criteria (see Section 3.3.1.2). Furthermore, the context, design and processes of this study were thoroughly described so that the results and conclusion can be transferred to other cities.

### **3.5.4 *Confirmability***

*Confirmability* refers to how accurate and impartial the researcher's interpretations and findings are in relation to the collected data. This relates to objectivity in qualitative research, where the researcher demonstrates how conclusions and interpretations have been reached (Creswell, 2014). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is established when credibility, transferability, and dependability are all achieved. To ensure confirmability of this study, I have outlined the theoretical lens, methodology and the deductive analysis process, including "direct quotations of the participants' views in the "findings sections" (see Chapter 4) to support how they fit into the themes. Furthermore, I have involved my supervisor as a reviewer in the data analysis phase to enhance confirmability. This served as an audit process while working forward and backward through the analysis in an attempt to ensure that the data collected and the interpretations of the findings are sound.

## **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics were considered in terms of data collection and designing the study to protect participants against any potential harm, as well as to ensure their safety. Before recruitment and data collection commenced, ethics clearance was obtained from the University of the



Free State's General Human Research Ethics Committee (UFS-HSD2019/1463/1103) (see Annexure F). Due to the nature of the study, arrangements were made with two hospitals and the City's Department of Social Development. This was mainly arranged to assist participants who may have required psychological and emotional support services and contact details of the institutions were provided in the consent form. These arrangements were made to ensure that the referral facilities were within close proximity and/or reach by participants and that the services are free of charge.

This study has adhered to basic ethical principles, namely informed consent (see Appendix C), anonymity and confidentiality, risk management and voluntary participation. Consent was sought from the participants before taking part in the semi-structured interviews. During the recruitment process, participants were provided with a copy of the information sheet (see Appendix B) and provided with clarity. Those who agreed to participate were asked to sign a written consent form. Furthermore, participation in this study was completely voluntary and there were no incentives offered or coercion used in recruiting participants. They were also informed that should they not be willing to participate or withdraw from participation during the course of the study, they might do so without a reason and without facing any negative repercussions.

Confidentiality and anonymity were also ensured to protect participants against any potential harm. Participants were reassured that the information they share would only be accessible to myself and my supervisor. The participants' names were coded to protect their identities, meaning that no participant could be identified in the transcripts or in the final write-up by their real names, or any other personal information they may have given. Furthermore, while audio-recording the interviews, names of participants were recorded separately so that participants are not linked to the data collected. Hard copies of the participants' responses are stored in a locker cupboard/filing cabinet at the researcher's office for future research or academic purposes, while the electronic information is stored on the researcher's password-protected computer.

To deal with anticipated inconveniences, a risk management plan was put in place to ensure that participants receive the necessary psychological support should they show some signs of emotional distress. Internal arrangements were made with the City of Johannesburg's Social Development Department to offer the necessary support through their Social Workers and contacts were provided to the participants. Furthermore, participants were offered the contact details for Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg General and Tembisa General Hospitals

should they prefer Councillors/Psychologists rather than Social Workers. All these facilities are locally based, easy to access and offer their services free of charge.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter advanced a general overview of the processes and procedures undertaken throughout the study. These include the nature of the research by outlining the selected qualitative research design, followed by the sampling and data collection processes and protocols. The thematic data analysis process and a protocol with a deductive logic were also outlined. Furthermore, I provided trustworthiness of the study as well as the ethical considerations which were adhered to. Therefore, a detailed provision of research processes and procedures was provided in order to ensure the applicability and consistency of the research findings.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I report on the findings of nine (9) participants from unemployed families. Each participant had two (2) interviews which were four (4) months apart to allow for time to reflect, confirm and to enrich data. Therefore, 18 semi-structured interviews in total were conducted and analysed through thematic analysis method. This method incorporated both the inductive and deductive logic of analysis called hybrid thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Furthermore, I also indicate the application of the theoretical framework in this study. Lastly, the three (3) main themes and nine (9) sub-themes identified in relation to the study's theoretical framework are discussed.

### **4.2 Application of the Theoretical Framework**

The current study aims to explore and describe the functioning and coping mechanisms of unemployed family members within the constituent of resilience. The study examines family members' experiences of resilience, in particular the coping mechanisms and functioning in the face of unemployment as a risk factor. In Chapter 2, various research studies highlighted the negative impact of unemployment on a family system, indicating that unemployment poses an immediate threat to the well-being and well-functioning of families. In accordance with these findings, unemployment was explored from a resilience perspective, as opposed to vulnerability and a pathological perspective. The main purpose behind using family resilience as a theoretical lens was to unmask the embedded protective factors, coping strategies and thriving potential in families affected by unemployment.

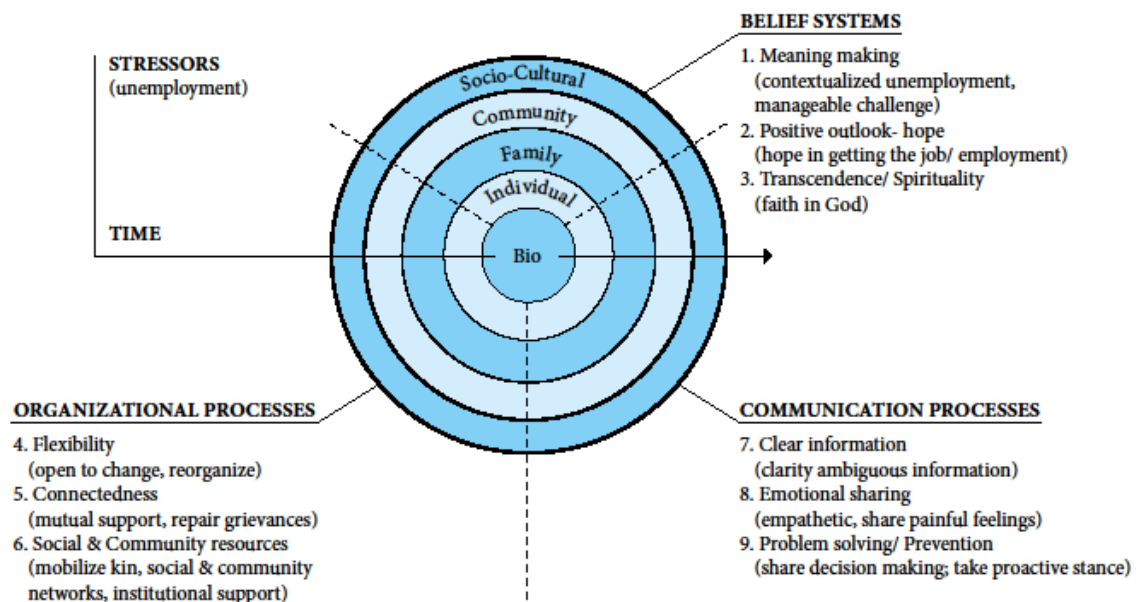
According to the Family Resilience Theory of Walsh (1996), family resilience is forged in the presence or face of adversity. Families facing adversities are thus viewed as being challenged rather than as non-functioning, and affirm their reparative and growth potential (Walsh, 1996, 2003a). It further proposes that a family can, despite adversity and risk, thrive through the members' collaborative efforts. Such families have the potential to identify and fortify key processes that enable them to surmount present disruptive challenges and persistent stresses. Therefore, a family as a functional unit and through interactional processes, is able to function optimally in the face of adversity (Patterson, 2002b), which is

unemployment in this context. The theory further suggests that all families facing challenges have the potential for resilience.

In view of the above, this study further examines the interactional processes which are identified as key transactional processes to family resilience, according to Walsh's (1996) Family Resilience Theory. The transactional processes (coping and functioning) are examined through reported experiences by participants in the face of unemployment. Participants reported relational resilience, which includes three domains or themes, namely (a) family belief systems, (b) organisational patterns or processes, and (c) communication/problem-solving processes (Walsh, 2003b). In these processes, families reported how interactional processes enhanced their resiliency to cope and function with the adverse event of unemployment. Upon the analysis of data, the interactional resilience processes were found to be dynamic in nature and helped families to strengthen their bonds while developing more resources and competencies. Figure 5 indicates a virtual presentation of how the Family Resilience Theory (Walsh, 1996) was applied to the current study.

**Figure 5**

***Virtual Representation of the Family Resilience Theory Applied to the Current Study***



### 4.3 Perspectives on Family Resilience

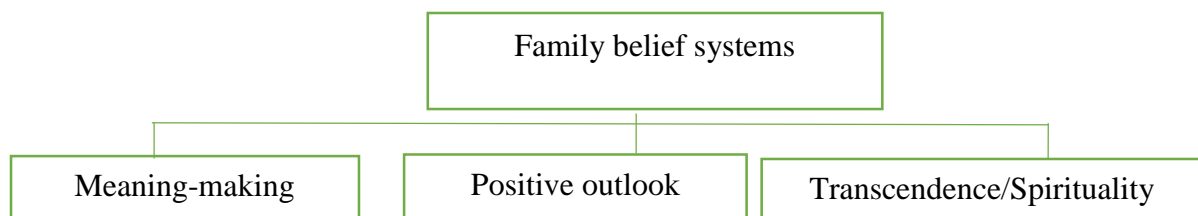
#### 4.3.1 Presentation of Data and Results

A total of 215 excerpts were identified after the first and second coding procedure from 18 interviews transcripts. These excerpts included a total of 295 individual codes and were organised and fitted into a priori coding template (Crabtree & Miller, 1999), to formulate themes and sub-themes. Codes which were not relevant to the study's research aim, question and theoretical framework, were discarded. For the purposes of maintaining this analysis as concisely as possible, only best excerpts representing the themes and sub-themes were clustered together and used as examples (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Many participants have indicated through the identified themes how they are coping and functioning in the face of unemployment. The list of themes was categorised as family belief systems, organisational patterns and communication/problem-solving patterns, as well as the nine (9) sub-themes which are presented hereunder and later discussed in Chapter 5.

#### *Theme 1: Family beliefs systems*

#### **Figure 6**

#### *Schematic Presentation of Theme 1 and its Sub-themes*



According to Walsh (1996), family belief systems refer to families which collaboratively shares their beliefs towards an adverse situation, which shape and reinforce interactional patterns. Their belief system guides how they further approach and respond to present and future situations. Families that hold strong belief systems are thus able to cope and function in the face of adversity. Recently, Walsh (2003b, 2016a, 2016b) asserts that belief systems are crucial in helping family members to make meaning of an adverse situation, facilitate a hopeful and positive outlook, as well as offering transcendence or spiritual values.

*Sub-theme 1.1: Meaning making*

The manner in which families make sense of a crisis or stressful situation and bestow it with meaning, is most crucial for their resilience. This was indicated by many participants when they articulated the manner in which they contextualised and viewed unemployment as a manageable situation. For example, Rethabile said:

... Uhm, we coping [...] I wouldn't say that's really bad but we coping, cause my mother is receiving UIF and her package from her previous work, and my father is a pensioner too, and my son is earning a social grant (P:R/T:1/Line4).

Furthermore, Mpho perceives their unemployed situation in a meaningful way by uttering the following words:

Yeah, there is a lot of good, because for example, is winter now - sometimes they [sister and brother-in-law] do buy my kid some clothes for winter, at least they meet me halfway because I have no income (P:M/T:1/Line14).

Lydia and Thato respectively indicated how they normalised their unemployment situation in order to cope by saying:

... Is not [pause], let me tell you, I got used to work around it, because if you don't, you gonna – gonna - I'm telling you, it affects your mind. So, you gonna try to cope around it, so that's what I did. Is not that a person loves to be unemployed, I'm telling you, it is a struggle, I tried to see if I can't find something in the hospitality, I know about cooking and all about that, you try everything but sometimes it doesn't work into your benefit, then you – you - you sell things and is not working, then you leave it. Then I tried selling something else, I even tried to sell clothes and perfumes (P:L/T:1/Line6).

While Thato said:

Uhm, there is nothing they can do because I am old enough to go and look for a job. I am used to the environment (P:T/T:1/Line7).

During a follow-up interview, many participants acknowledged the negative impact Covid-19 has had on companies and the potential to hire. However, some of the participants perceive this challenge in a meaningful way. For example, Mmaphutsi articulated as follows:

So is [pause] Covid-19 has helped, so it got advantages and disadvantages but for me to be honest, there is more advantages. The introspection, it went very deep, it went very, very deep where you calculate [...] myself a lot (P:M/T:2/Line19).

*Sub-theme 1.2: Positive outlook*

Another family belief system the majority of participants highlighted was their positive illusions towards unemployment. Van Breda (2016) argues that when current life circumstances are challenging, the positive belief that the future will be better, instils hope. Therefore, hope drives and enhances family resilience as families develop confidence to overcome their crisis situations. During the interviews, Grace, Siphon and Rebecca conceded that optimistic bias keeps them moving, as it gives hope and courage to cope and function in the face of unemployment. They assert as follows:

Uhm, it really depresses me, yeah, it is really sad, we uhm, I talk to them, we talk. I tell them that when I get a job, we will go back to living the life that we used to live. I tried to explain a lot to them, so that they understand but is hard you know children, they don't really get it (P:G/T:1/Line9).

... All I can say is that we are struggling, but I have hope like I will get something. I will get a job and things will go back to normal, cause now we just struggling but is life (P:S/T:1/Line6).

Eh, yeah, I believe changes will be there as time goes as I believe in God. God is also watching us and this situation cannot really be our destiny. The status that I am in tomorrow will be different as life evolves (P:R/T:1/Line13).

Thato added that:

Uhm, for now I have been job hunting, there is a promise that from next month I might start working (P:T/T:1/Line13).

Furthermore, Lerato`s responses during the interview imply a positive attitude, as her family seems to have accepted the current situation and thus indicated that they are able to tolerate uncertainties. In one of her responses she said:

Mmh [pause] when there is no one working at home, you always have frustrations, you think too much, when is end of the months, you have to make ends meet just to provide for your family (P:L/T:2/Line23).

Consequently, Rethabile`s focus on getting a job is undivided as she emphasised her dedication by saying:

Well, I`ve learned to go for every opportunity even if is a general worker job as long as you can get something to put food on the table. So, I apply for all the posts I see (P:R/T:2/Line23).

### *Sub-theme 1.3: Transcendence/ spirituality*

Transcendence just like spirituality, referring to the divine or spiritual values connected to cultural and spiritual traditions individuals and families turn to in times of crisis (Walsh, 1996, 2003a). These values, to a greater or lesser extent, provide families with strength, comfort and guidance in troubled times. The following excerpts illustrate family members` transcendence beliefs and practices as values that provide meaning and purpose in overcoming the adversity pertaining to unemployment.

Mpho stated that:

... Yes, it is, because for now I don`t have money to pay for my kid`s school transport, uh, she has an eczema and I don`t have money to buy her medicine [pause] and just God`s grace (P:T/T:1/Line6).

Lydia, living in a family of 10, believes that seeking divine intervention assists them to cope with unemployment challenges by saying:

Yoh, there is a lot of negativity, especially in this area that we are living in. There is negativity every day, the reason that I [...] is that, I am a spiritual



person, what I do in the morning is that every day I wake up pray to God. The reason is that you got to be wake up and got to be mentally there, and the only reason I am mentally there is that I wake up and pray. He is the one that helps, I pray for my children, I pray for my family, especially in the days that we living in now, we've got corona, all other things, the violence that is going on. You got up, uhm, I concentrate in the morning and say Lord please let me have [...] carry me through this thing, because there is very [...] especially [...] let me tell you there is a lot of negativity, the people are demotivated in this place, uhm, is the drugs, you got to watch out for your children not to be on drugs, alcohol and violence. Its robbery - they rob houses and breakings; you know you got to [...] we always on the edge. So, the only way to cope - be focus and rely on Almighty (P:L/T:1/Line7).

Mmaphutsi further stated that she believes they survive through spiritual connections when she said:

Oh, through God`s grace, ai, I'm just surviving, I don't even know, nobody believes it. Ai, you know what neh, I'm just surviving hey. Uhm, my daughter is at least trying hey and I thank God for that and I've got one family friend I even got flour from her, she stays here in Rabie Ridge, oh, and I really have to recommend her for your study. You know I think what helps me survive is my character, I am not a pride person, I'm not scared to ask. Wherever I go, the place changes completely, just my character (P:M/T:1/Line11).

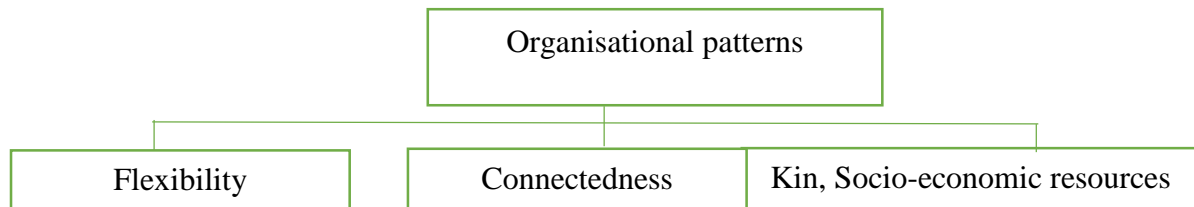
Rebecca added that:

Eh, things will be back to normal, I trust in God. A big thing is to trust in him and things will happen (P:R/T:2/Line 18).

## *Theme 2: Organisational patterns/processes*

**Figure 7**

### *Schematic Presentation of Theme 2 and its Sub-themes*



Families organise themselves distinctively to mitigate present life challenges they are faced with in order to function well and for their well-being. Walsh (1996, 2003a, 2016b) articulates that families with diverse structures and resources are able to organise themselves in various ways to function optimally and meet life's challenges. In this study, participants indicated how their families adapted to unemployment challenges by constructing new ways of coping despite their present challenges. Their resilience is thus strengthened when their family structure is flexible, when there is a level of cohesion among its members, as well as their ability to mobilise external support, in particular social and economic support.

#### *Sub-theme 2.1: Flexibility*

Flexibility involves openness to adaptive change to meet new and future life challenges. Families that are adaptive to change can easily navigate their way to resources and processes which can help them cope and function with adversity (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). This was also reinforced by some of the participants in this study, indicating how they had to rearrange since they were affected by unemployment.

For example, Rethabile mentioned that her family had to reorganise, focus on potential and adjust to the unemployment situation when she said:

... Yes, it is very difficult because right now, we need to have a budget which food to buy and which food we shouldn't buy anymore (P:R/T:1/Line7).

Lerato further articulated how they had to rearrange their lives by cutting some of the activities. This was evident when she said:

Because the [social] grant is not enough. Uh, is not enough. I can't afford - I can't afford to take my child to pre-school because I don't have income anymore (P:L/T:1/Line7).

Lydia indicated their focus on potential by providing guidance and strong authoritative rule while maintaining bonds and reaching consensus about values and roles:

Well, remember making ends meet, you must cut on things in your life, if you want something, you aim to [...]. You know when I start building my house, my boys were still young and I used to say boys you not gonna have Christmas clothes, you not gonna have those luxuries, you know those sweets and stuff, toys, my perfumes, my hair, you cut a lot of things, you sacrifice to get where you wanna be. You can't - you can't, uhm, get money and go have a party every weekend with friends, that's what I teach my boys, you can't, if you want something in life, you got to be focused, you can't take your money and go drink it and come back and on Monday you don't have anything, focus and do your things with that little that you get (P:L/T:1/Line9).

Thato's family also had to balance, reorganise and adapt to new living conditions. This was evident when she said:

Ai, for me is difficult because there are some - things I can't afford to buy for my kid. For example, now is winter and I can't afford to buy her winter clothes, I can't take all the grant money and buy winter clothes while I have to feed her, she must eat (P:T/T:1/Line9).

Other families, like Siphos, are flexible in terms of navigating several options other than seeking employment in order to function optimally. These options could relate to start a small business, mobilise resources from kin or government and non-government institutions. For example, he said:

Well, I did accept that I'm not working, in life you must just try other things in order to survive (P:S/T:2/Line21).

*Sub-theme 2.2: Connectedness*

Patterson (2002a) argues that the balance between closeness and distance in families remains important if cohesiveness was to act as a protective factor. In this sense, family members need to, through collaborative efforts, mutually support each other and ensure commitment in order to alleviate the adverse effects of a situation. Furthermore, most families foster their resilience through pursuing reconnections and reconciliations with the aim to repair grievances, especially after going through challenging situations (Boss, 2001). This has also become evident in this study, where Grace, amongst other participants demonstrated how her family sought reconnections and repaired conflicts by saying:

Uhm, as I said that we talk a lot ever since I was unemployed. Ah, I talk a lot with my kids, sometimes they are naughty especially the boys. They would steal money here and there so, I like siting them down, talking to them, explaining to them that we cannot afford the life we used to live. So, they must just be patient and try to bear with me until I get a job, and we will go back to the life that we used to live (P:G/T:1/Line14).

Mmaphutsi added that:

Eh, my family and I, like the last time we spoke, we still have not been interacting well. My children though [...] are slowly coming closer, the relationship is coming along, even my sister – remember I said she’s the only sister I have from my mother`s side, I even borrowed money from her so I can go to work. So, is only three days that I have been doing this selling of food, you know it boost a person`s confidence. I`m telling you just that extra ten rand you get it makes a difference because we are able to buy airtime and bread. So, now I need to start recording income and expenditure (P:M/T:2/Line16).

Sipho has also reiterated the level of tolerance of their differences and said:

With my wife, we sometime [...] cause women they talk too much and talk loudly. When she is angry, she is shouting, so I go out or on a jog or something, when I come back, she`s fine she has cooled down. You know

women are like children, if she's not happy she talks and get relief and after that she's fine (P:S/T:1/Line13).

Collaboration amongst family members plays a significant role in enhancing connectedness. For instance, Lerato talked about cohesion and closeness in her family and their ease of engagement, especially when they are confronted with disagreements. She said:

Uhm, we talk, because at the end of the day we are a family and we have to support each other. I must say there is peace but not really, because when children want something and we can't provide, it really puts a strain on us (P:L/T:2/Line21).

Thato also corroborated this and said:

We try by all means to sit down and talk about it as a family (P:T/T:1/Line11).

### *Sub-theme 2.3: Kin and socio-economic resources*

All participants indicated to have mobilised kin and social networks to make ends meet in order to deal with employment challenges. The institutional support from government, especially through social grants, has also been a key source of support in order for families to make ends meet. Through these mobilised networks, families were able to build financial security and navigate unemployment challenges.

For example, Rethabile said:

... Uhm, we coping [...] I wouldn't say that's really bad but we coping, cause my mother is receiving UIF and her package from her previous work, and my father is a pensioner too, and my son is earning a social grant (P:R/T:1/Line4).

Grace further highlighted the support her family receives from extended family when she mentioned that:

I am only getting assistance from my family, yeah, and from my husband as well, he helps when he wants to, so yeah, well I'm getting help from my

brother, my younger brother - he doesn't have kids. He is not married yet so, he is - he is being very understanding and very helpful (P:G/T:1/Line13).

Mpho highlighted the kinds of networks and resources they tap into during their current unemployment status. In order to balance the strains and enhancing their coping mechanism, Mpho said:

Sometimes we get food parcels from churches and under the City of Johannesburg sometimes they do [...] uh, they do give vegetables (P:M/T:1/Line10).

Mpho continued to say:

Uh - uh [pause] sometimes from my family - I get help [pause] sometimes they give me money or sometimes my brother-in-law buys me a grocery. It depends on how their budget is (P:M/T:1/Line12).

Rebecca further said:

Well, at home is very difficult to say [...] it is difficult not to have income because when we want something [...] we have to borrow or make other plans (P:R/T:1/Line10).

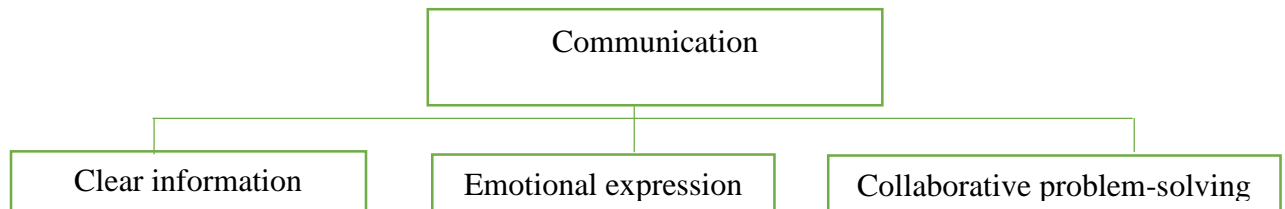
Lerato indicated the institutional support they tap into on a monthly basis to make ends meet as she said:

I'm staying with my mom, my little brother and my two kids. We are five in a household and all four are my dependants. No one is employed, we survive on SASSA grant for two of my children (P:L/T:1/Line1).

### *Theme 3: Communication*

**Figure 8**

*Schematic Presentation of Theme 3 and its Sub-themes*



Resilient families use communication as a tool to convey clear information to their members in the presence of conflict and/or disagreements. Communication is also used as a viable means to share emotional feelings with the aim to repair cut-offs and grievances (Walsh, 2016a). Similarly, many participants indicated how communication played a significant role in enhancing their resilience as they managed to clarify information, sharing their emotions openly, as well as collaborating in solving their grievances.

#### *Sub-theme 3.1: Clear information*

In stressful situations, uncertainty arises and communication may easily break down. Walsh (2003b) asserts that it is critical for families to engage through clear and consistent messages to facilitate effective family functioning. This is critically important for family members to clearly understand the direction they, as a family unit, should embark upon in dealing with the current unemployment challenges. By so doing, they improve on their level of communication as they clarify glitches and uncertainties. It was also evident in this case where Lerato and Lydia respectively mentioned that:

We talk about it as a family. My mom will sit us down and talk about our disagreements. We resolve them and move on ... (P:L/T:1/Line13).

Frustrations come, shout - after shouting then you realise what I did was not right, we sit down, then we have a meeting, then we talk about it (P:L/T:1/Line11).

Rethabile, on the other hand, indicated how they, as a family unit, clarify ambiguous information by saying:

Uh, we just talk it through like you have [...] uhm, if one of us doesn't understand, like, we don't rush to make decisions. We do make decisions together, yeah, so, if one of us doesn't understand or want to take their own way, like, we have to talk and talk until we all on the same page (P:R/T:1/Line14).

Rebecca added that the level of closeness in her family makes it easy for them to communicate issues as and when they arise. This is evident when she said:

Uhm, we sit down and discuss our issues, we also have an uncle who stay not far from here. You know my children are not really noisy they just quiet and reserved (P:R/T:2/Line19).

Furthermore, Grace said:

Uhm, because I only stay here with my children, uhm, I'm the mother, I'm the one who has to see that this family functions. Uhm, whenever there is an argument between them, I sit them down and I try to talk to them and explain that, uhm, I've got stress – I've got my own stresses with other things. So, I don't need them to cause more stress and I tried to show them that they need to get along because they are a family and even when the grievance is between me and them, that's what I do (P:G/T:2/Line19).

### *Sub-theme 3.2: Emotional expression*

When family members' emotions are intense in the face of a stressful situation, conflict may erupt and get out of control. Patterson (2002a) and Walsh (2016b) assert that sharing a wide range of feelings in an open communication, enables well-being amongst family members. These feelings could range from empathy, tolerance for differences, to painful feelings such as anger, sadness and fear. In this sense, family members enhance their resilience when they openly share their emotions with the aim to find an amicable way forward and to cope with the current adversity. Participants in this study also highlighted the



importance of sharing their feelings, including having pleasurable interactions in coping with challenges relating to unemployment.

For example, Grace, as the single parent to her three children, shows empathy to her family when she said:

I think we have grown uhm, [...] much closer because uh, [...] I feel bad, I don't shout at my children anymore. I feel bad for them, I understand that they want the life that they used to have and they can't have it now. So, I try to be more understanding to them even though is hard for me, but yeah, I tried to be closer with them and give them more love because I can't give them anything else more than that (P:G/T:1/Line15).

Lydia also reiterated how they ordinarily express their feelings by saying:

Frustrations come, shout - after shouting then you realise what I did was not right, we sit down, then we have a meeting, then we talk about it (P:L/T:1/Line11).

Thato also said:

Like for example, if we have conflicts is about food, not buying food. If like we raise money, we try to raise money to buy food, maybe there is someone [siblings] on the other hand who doesn't wanna pop-out something. So, is sometimes hard, but we sit and discuss how we gonna go about it (P:T/T:1/Line12).

Sipho further asserted by saying:

You know as people; we sometimes have differences especially women. When they are angry, they talk so they can be relieved and sometimes it can sound disrespectful, but is part of life (P:S/T:2/Line19).

### *Sub-theme 3.3: Collaborative problem solving*

When family resources are stretched, especially as a result of loss of income, competition and conflicts are likely to emerge and become uncontrollable. It will thus take a

resilient family to collaboratively resolve its mounting challenges. A proactive stance, through family members' collaborative efforts, can be put in place to prepare a plan on how to handle future challenges. Similarly, in this study, many participants have iterated the manner in which they handle their grievances, disagreements and how they manage to live and love again.

For example, Rebecca indicated how her family collectively brainstorms possible solutions towards their disagreements when she mentioned that:

Yeah, sometimes I try to be quiet when we have conflicts and the following day - I call them [family] and we talk about our issues. Sometimes I call in my brothers who are not staying far from here and we involve them in addressing our issues (P:R/T:1/Line13).

Lydia's family, on the other hand, takes a proactive stance in addressing issues by planning so they are prepared for the future when she said:

It was much better; it was much smoother because you know you split responsibilities in the house, and maybe I'll say I buy groceries and you [husband] pay the debts, because you have to pay policies also burial policies. You cannot not have burial policies, if something happens to you and the boys or grandchildren what's gonna happen? So, we split the responsibilities, I say you pay that, I'll do the groceries and I'll look after the children, because I have to buy Pampers (P:L/T:1/Line5).

Lerato added that:

Yeah, you see when there is no one who is employed, most of the time we argue, but as a family we end up making up, yeah we give each other support, yeah we talk and resolve our issues (P:L/T:2/Line19).

Other families indicated that, over and above taking a proactive stance and having creative brainstorming, it is also important to learn from past mistakes and learn to live once again. This was evident when Mmaphutsi said:

Oh, you know what neh - appreciation. Like I told you just some few minutes ago, appreciate the little you got and make the best out of it. For now, that

basically what covers everything. That one thing I can say really. And then also my mind-set – I am a person who is always positive but then negativity and procrastination always overtake - overpowers me. So, therefore, I can say now slowly I'm trying to deal with postponements because that's what causes me depression, because even when I was working – I would store my work for tomorrow then it becomes too much. That even at school I remember. So now, I start today for tomorrow, they even told us even at the age of 36 I'm still learning (P:M/T:2/Line23).

Mpho's family engages as a collective when addressing their issues. She said:

Usually we are [pause] whoever got a problem, we call each other and sit, and solve the problem (P:M/T:2/Line19).

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the results of the present study by highlighting findings from families affected by the adverse effects of unemployment. It encompassed the application of the theoretical framework as well as the presentation of data and results in a form of themes and excerpts as examples. Of importance is that families were found to have used nine (9) key transactional processes or protective factors to enhance their resilience. The nine (9) transactional processes were organised into three (3) themes or domains of family functioning, namely belief systems, organisational processes and communication/problem-solving processes.

Discussion of these results, followed by limitations and recommendations, as well as concluding remarks of the study are discussed in the following chapter.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 begins with a summary of the results reported on in Chapter 4. Also included in this chapter is the discussion of the results in relation to the theoretical framework and literature. Subsequently, the chapter also highlights the implications for practice and policy and the contributions of the study, as well as acknowledging its limitations. Thereafter, the recommendations for practical implications and suggestions for further research are presented. This culminates in the final overview remarks of the study.

### **5.2 Summary of the Results**

The aim of this current study was, from a Family Resilience Theory (Walsh, 1996) perspective, to explore and describe the resilience, in particular optimal functioning and coping mechanisms of families affected by unemployment within the City of Johannesburg. As a result, data was collected from nine (9) participants and each had two (2) interviews which were four (4) months apart, yielding a total of 18 interview transcripts. These transcripts were analysed through a hybrid thematic analysis which incorporated both the inductive and deductive logics. Nine (9) themes were generated and clustered into three (3) domains, namely family beliefs system, organisation patterns, and communication processes.

The findings of this study support past resilience research, suggesting that family resilience is an instrumental protective factor which enhances coping and optimal functioning in times of distress or stressful situations (Bond & Van Breda, 2018; Herdiana et al., 2017; Isaacs et al., 2018; Raniga & Mthembu, 2017, Walsh, 2016a). The results indicate that despite the adverse effects of unemployment, families still managed to thrive through their members' collaborative efforts. It thus implies that families constructed positive meaning towards their adverse unemployed situations and perceived it as a challenge that is manageable. This viewpoint has given families a positive outlook and strengths which affirmed their reparative and growth potential. Therefore, their thriving and coping potential were evident in the key transactional processes they tapped into, which played a protective role in enhancing family resilience.

### **5.3 Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Theoretical Framework and Literature**

In this study, unemployment was regarded as a risk factor affecting the functioning and well-being of families. This was also noted in both the international and local studies, which asserted in literature the adverse effects of unemployment and its negative impact on a family system, posing an immediate threat to the well-being and well-functioning of families (Bisschoff et al., 2019; Izaks et al., 2017; Khumalo et al., 2012; Makiwane et al., 2017; Roman et al., 2016; Theron & Phasha, 2015; Victor, 2016). In addition, these effects are both socio-economic and psychological in nature, which manifests itself through family conflicts, deprivation of resources and high stress levels, to name but a few. This is indicative that the quality of life suffers as most families are unable to meet their daily basic needs and this result in persistent stress. However, the results of this study contradict the findings as highlighted by previous studies, mainly because those studies explored and investigated unemployment from a vulnerability and pathological perspective.

Nonetheless, the present study explored unemployment from a resilience perspective with the intent to unmask the embedded protective factors, coping strategies and thriving potential in affected families. This study, through its theoretical framework, found protective factors that families use in order to cope and function in the face of unemployment. These protective factors assumed to be enhancing their family resilience.

It has also been evident that in family resilience research, risks and protective factors play an interactive role, as family resilience is forged through adversity (Walsh, 2016b). In this context, unemployment was a risk and the results of the study are protective factors. The Family Resilience (Walsh, 1996) perspective also supports the results of the study in articulating that families facing challenges have the potential for growth in the face of adversity.

For the purpose of this study, the following four (4) themes are discussed in relation to theory and literature in the section below as transcendence/spirituality, connectedness, kin and socio-economic resources, as well as communication.

#### **5.3.1 *Transcendence/Spirituality***

Participants in this study echoed transcendence beliefs as a basis that gives meaning and purpose in their families. They draw strength and comfort through connection with their spiritual domains as they remain hopeful during their stressful unemployment status. In most

instances, participants reiterated their traditional practices, such as worshipping at a church and praying to God as a source of strength and hope to cope with the adverse effects of unemployment. The common belief from the participants is that their thriving potential emanates from God's wilful power and mercy. These findings were similar to those of Izaks et al. (2017), who found families in the Gouda community in the Western Cape Province using spiritual strengths and prayers to cope with the negative effects of unemployment.

Additionally, Isaacs et al. (2017) also found spiritual and religious practices enhancing beliefs that safeguard families from harmful effects of exposure to violence. Their study explored family resilience needs of a rural community in the West Coast of South Africa, and participants scored high in the dimension of beliefs. For example, most families relied on this dimension of family resilience when faced with economic challenges. It therefore implies that families have strong ties with their faith, churches, and spiritual denominations as they hope for change. Consistent with these findings, Steinert et al. (2018) have noted a greater improvement in family members' optimism and future orientation during short plays and storytelling sessions. It thus signifies that families have hope that the present challenges will soon be over and they will be able to live and love again.

Furthermore, Van Breda (2016) also found traditional spirituality and practices as the source of resilience in low- and middle-income communities. This is indicative that spiritual resources offer significant value in families facing stressful situations, just like in the case of families facing the adverse effects of unemployment.

A study by Raniga and Mthembu (2017) found spiritual beliefs pertaining to rituals as the major predictor of resilience and later positive life adaptation in a sample of families from low-income communities. It was, however, rarely reported in this present study, as the majority of participants advocated their spiritual ties with God or Christianity. Nonetheless, Walsh (1998) asserts that spiritual practices, such as rituals, prayer and meditation, are wellspring of family resilience. The findings of this study, as well as the theory, imply that unemployed families were able to cope and function through tapping into their belief systems as they are spiritually nourished. These findings thus broaden our understanding of the positive effects the family spiritual undertaking has in finding comfort, coping, purpose, and thriving potential.

### 5.3.2 *Connectedness*

This study encompasses unemployed families from a broad diversity of households and family compositions. Many families were female-headed single parenting, while others are divorced and others never married but are living together with their partners. Despite their family compositions, they have displayed the degree of connectedness which is determined through mutual support, love, warmth and experiences of closeness in their families. Participants in this study have further demonstrated how their families seek reconnections and repair conflicts. Families' collaboration and mutual support have rendered significant support and protection against the negative effects of unemployment. These findings are consistent with what Mkhize (2008) and Sarra and Berman (2017) refer to as "*ubuntu*", the indigenous concept that embraces the humanitarian principles of sharing and distribution of wealth. In most African cultural groups, a sense of sharing and/or helping others signifies good humankind, cohesion and warmth. It is therefore important to note that these kinds of supports enhance families' resilience in the presence of stressful situations.

Additionally, a South African study by Danhouse and Erusmus (2020), exploring connectedness in families dealing with adolescence in conflict with the law, recommended family connectedness as an effective tool that purposefully addresses behavioural challenges faced by adolescents. Its findings were that weak family bonds rendered parents powerless to help or provide the necessary support to their children who were constantly in conflict with the law. It thus implies that the closeness and positive relations amongst family members are crucial to the adolescents' development and behavioural patterns.

The family resilience theory supports the notion that collaboration and tolerance of family members' differences play a significant role in enhancing connectedness (Patterson, 2002a; Walsh, 2016a). Families that are disintegrated in the presence of stressful situations are likely to become less available to one another. Consequently, this will have an impact on their mutual support, willingness to reconnect and their efforts to repair grievances amongst themselves. It is thus clear that family connectedness is influenced by mutual relationships and commitments amongst family members, especially when confronted with challenges. A study on family functioning, life satisfaction and happiness in South African households by Botha and Booysen (2014) found greater levels of attachment and changeability, positively related to optimal family functioning. These constructs are similar to what Walsh (2003b) refers to as connectedness and flexibility. It thus implies that flexible and connected families

collaboratively reconnect and adapt to new challenges as they emerge in order to cope with the adverse situation.

Another study found insecure connections to have a detrimental effect on the levels of trust, attention and ability to depend on one another (Odimegwu & Mkwanaenzi, 2018). Their study focused on family structure and connectedness which found the absence of quality interactions and significant members, such as parents or caregivers, leading to children's involvement in risky behaviours, such as teenage pregnancy. Contrary to the findings of Odimegwu and Mkwanaenzi (2018), the present study found most families displaying a fulfilled sense of belonging and reconciliation as they shared their functional relations, cohesion and closeness. The quality of family interaction and mutual collaborative efforts, despite the challenges of unemployment, enhanced coping, which resulted in optimal functioning.

The findings of this study signify the role family organisational patterns play in the functioning and well-being of families in the face of unemployment. It implies that families that are organised, in this case through connectedness, are able to surmount persistent stressful situations and function optimally at the same time. Families that are not connected or that are disintegrated are less likely to deal with stressful situations. The family resilience perspective further asserts that family members, through their family patterns and processes, are able to reconstruct adversity by contextualising it in a meaningful and achievable manner (Bhana & Bachoo, 2011; Black & Lobo, 2008; Patterson, 2002b; Walsh, 1996). Such families have the potential to identify and fortify key processes that enable them to surmount present disruptive challenges and persistent stresses.

### **5.3.3 *Kin and Socio-economic Resources***

Resources play an integral role, as highlighted by almost all participants, in coping with the adverse effects of unemployment. It is common to those who are unemployed to find it difficult to meet basic daily needs due to less or no buying power. However, in this study, for instance, many participants managed to mobilise kin and social networks to make ends meet in order to deal with employment challenges. For example, participants indicated that they cope through the support they get from extended families in order to function in the face of unemployment. These findings are consistent with those of Mahlangu (2015), who explored resilience processes employed by families from low socio-economic backgrounds in South Africa. Mahlangu (2015) found families using social support and assistance from



extended family members to cope better with social ills such as poverty and unemployment. Furthermore, Bond and Van Breda (2018) conducted a study on care-leavers and found them, despite being unemployed, having the ability through family relationship networks to access and maximise the utility of resources and opportunities in order to survive. It therefore indicates that by tapping into available resources, such as extended family, alleviates pressure and enhances family resilience.

Others participants indicated receiving support from institutions such as government, especially through social grants and food parcels, which have been the key source of support in order for families to make ends meet. These findings correlate with previous studies conducted in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape which investigated survival strategies of unemployed women in rural areas and found many women surviving through social welfare grants, gambling and informal trading (Malekutu, 2014; Steinert et al., 2018). This is indicative that families may, despite unemployment, function optimally when they make use of externally available resources.

Consistent with these findings, Walsh's (2003a) FRF asserts families' organisational processes as being pivotal in coping in the face of adversity. These processes include a family's ability to use kinships, social supports and economic resources, as well as its flexibility to cope with the adverse situation. It therefore implies that through these mobilised networks and resources, families were able to build financial security, enhance their coping as well as successfully navigating unemployment challenges.

#### **5.3.4 Communication**

In this study, most participants stated communication as a problem-solving technique. For instance, participants indicated how they use communication to convey clear information, sharing their emotions openly as well as collaborating in solving their grievances when they are confronted with disagreements and conflicting ideas. These findings compare with those of Isaacs et al. (2018), who adapted and validated the Family Resilience Assessment Scale in an Afrikaans rural community in South Africa and found communication to be the underlying component of all domains of family resilience. Communication is thus an essential technique that conveys the enhancement of resilience in families.

In addition, Roman et al. (2016) found communication as a strong predictor of family adaptation, as it enhances problem-solving abilities during a family crisis. In line with these findings, Lewis (2018) argues that consistent parenting with clear communication between

children and parents serves as a protective factor for children across cultures, mainly because it nurtures and creates a responsive environment. These assertions are supported by Mampane (2014), arguing that families are able to foster meaning and informed decisions when there is clear information regarding the adverse situation. Similarly, in this study, participants were able to clarify ambiguous information through open communication when having arguments or disagreements.

Furthermore, the findings are supported by the family resilience theory of Walsh (1996), which suggests that effective family functioning is facilitated through engaging in clear and consistent messages. As families engage in clear information and share emotions such as fear and anger, they also map a way forward in order to cope with the current adversities. Participants in this study also articulated how they share their feelings, including having pleasurable interactions in coping with challenges relating to unemployment. It therefore suggests that communication has been essential and beneficial to their family functioning and well-being.

In conclusion, the results of this study highlighted how families in the City of Johannesburg cope and function in the face of unemployment. This study further described the resilience processes unemployment families tap into. The coping mechanisms and functioning of families were demonstrated through the outlined themes (see chapter 4), which are attributed to resilience transactional processes enhancing strengths, resources and positive coping in the face of adversity. It is therefore, worth noting that this study has managed to respond successfully to its overarching research questions and objectives.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

As with all research projects, this study was not without limitations. Firstly, the sample size comprised only nine (9) participants, which makes it difficult to apply the findings to broader populations. Statistics South Africa (2020) indicates that South Africa has a population of 55 million, of which 23.3% are unemployed. However, the aim of this study was not to generalise, but instead to provide in-depth perspectives on family resilience within and across cases which may be applied in similar contexts. In this regard, this study's transferability can only be on a case-to-case transfer considering the research design and the sampling methods utilised (Yin, 2018).

Secondly, eight (8) of the nine (9) participants were females. This may have equivocally provided a one-sided narrative due to unbalanced gender representation. This was

inevitable as a result of the employment of both the purposeful and snow-balling sampling techniques. It was, however, not the aim of the study to have a balanced gender representation, but rather perspectives of families through breadwinners or key family providers.

Thirdly, one coder in the generation or development of a priori codes and testing of the codebook as well as reviewing themes may possibly have compromised the credibility of the codes and themes. However, the two sets of interviews conducted assisted with member verification. Member checking, in the second interview, was used to verify participants' initial contributions as well as the generated themes. Furthermore, the researcher sent the coded and identified themes to the supervisor to ensure that meaningful interpretations had been made and that the presentation of the results was clear.

Lastly, the qualitative research paradigm has an element of face-to-face interaction and the researcher is deemed as an active participant, which may in turn contribute to bias during the interpretation of the results. To deal with bias, I have outlined a step-by-step methodological process, including direct quotations of the participants' views, as highlighted in the previous chapter, to support the generation of themes. Furthermore, an audit process of working forward and backward through the analysis in an attempt to ensure that the data collected and the interpretations of the findings are sound, was employed.

## **5.5 Implications of the Results for Practice and Policy**

This study has taken a different approach by exploring unemployment from a resilience perspective as opposed to a vulnerability perspective. It has thus brought a different feeling in the phenomenon commonly known as one of the social ills in South Africa. The study has managed to unmask factors enhancing family resilience in the face of unemployment, which could be helpful in practice and policy formulation. It is also important to note that the findings of the study embrace the strengths, resources and competency under the unemployed stressful conditions. The results suggest that resilient families emerge resourceful as they readjust their adversity to cope and function optimally.

It was noted in this study that participants expressed positive attitudes in managing the challenges of unemployment and this may be useful for other unemployed families. In addition, the purposeful selection of participants brought nuanced families' coping experiences which were expressed in the face of unemployment. The implication for participants was to provide a realistic view of family resilience within the context of

unemployment. It is thus argued that the accurate reflection of participants' views in the results indicates the credibility of the study.

The implication of this study for practice and policy relates to the formulation of protocols by professionals on potential protective factors unemployed families could tap into in order to thrive within and across similar contexts. The results of the study indicate that families can, despite adversity and risk, thrive through its members' collaborative efforts. I hope that this study could add value to families facing adversities. Firstly, family members may have to mutually support one another, as this enhances their connectedness and cohesion. Secondly, communication has been emphasised in both literature and the results as a cornerstone in resilience. This is mainly because communication is the key to conveying information. In this regard, families facing adversity may communicate clear and unambiguous information, especially when they are confronted with arguments and conflicts. Thirdly, families may embrace their transcendence beliefs and values in remaining positive and hopeful, as this helps with meaning. Many participants have highlighted drawing their strengths from God through praying and congregating. Therefore, families may tap into these resources to cope with and function amid adversities.

Lastly, the City of Johannesburg Municipality has the Expanded Social Package (ESP) programme targeting vulnerable groups, such as unemployed, pensioners, and child-headed households within its borders. The assistance offered by the programme includes rebates on municipal rates, water, electricity and refuse. In addition, the programme also provides social services such as food parcels, temporary shelters, drug rehabilitation and counselling. The City Council may therefore incorporate the findings of this study into the ESP programme to provide multifaceted socio-economic and psychological services to its residents in order to improve their lives amidst the rising unemployment rate and socio-economic challenges.

## **5.6 Recommendations for Further Research**

In South Africa, limited research has been conducted on family resilience in the face of unemployment, and this study paves a way for future studies on the subject matter. Further research is needed from family resilience researchers in various disciplines to firstly, collaboratively establish a series of family resilience case studies across different contexts of risk and significant adversities at multiple levels.

Secondly, further research should follow the qualitative research paradigm with a different design, such as phenomenology and ethnography, to broaden perspectives within other contexts. This should also be done within the “Africentric” (Theron, 2012, p. 335) and specifically within the South African context due to our diverse cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, further studies could focus on a broader spectrum by incorporating unemployed families across South Africa, as opposed to the current study focusing only on families within the City of Johannesburg.

Lastly, the effects of unemployment in South Africa seem to have similar adverse implications as alluded to in the study. This study recommends future studies to incorporate a substantial amount of gender representation which could potentially provide a balanced perspective on family resilience research in the face of unemployment. Furthermore, future studies should look at coping mechanisms of different family compositions, including single parents, same sex marriages and grandparents’ families to broaden our understanding of family resilience.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Many families are faced with various adversities. Similar to the present study, unemployment has been attributed as a significant adversity which negatively affects the functioning and well-being of many families in South Africa. The study also highlighted how families as functional units reciprocated to the adverse effects of unemployment. These families can also be argued to have played a significant role in the development and growth of its members. Despite the adverse conditions of unemployment, many families indicated their coping and optimal functioning through making use of interactional processes which served as protective factors. This has brought an understanding that family resilience is enhanced through various factors.

Nonetheless, the study has responded successfully to its research questions. Firstly, it has highlighted how families in the City of Johannesburg cope and function in the face of unemployment. Secondly, the results revealed the resilience transactional processes families tap into during their unemployed situations. These transactional processes were highlighted in the form of themes in the previous chapter and discussed in this present chapter.

It is therefore indicative that family resilience is embedded in protective factors that enable families’ thriving potential in the face of adversity. It is hoped that the findings of this study will inspire a positive attitude towards unemployment and instil a perception that

unemployment is a manageable phenomenon. Additionally, other unemployed and future unemployed families may be inspired on how to potentially thrive within and across similar contexts.

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## Appendix A – Permission Letter



City of Johannesburg  
Department of Corporate & Shared Services  
Office of the Group Head: Group Human Capital Management

6<sup>th</sup> Floor, B Block  
Metropolitan Centre  
158 Civic Boulevard  
Braamfontein

PO Box 1049  
Johannesburg  
South Africa  
2000

Tel +27(0) 11 407 6926  
Fax +27(0) 11 339 1878  
[www.joburg.org.za](http://www.joburg.org.za)

### Memorandum

TO : Lesiba Sydney Monakedi  
University of Free State  
Masters in Psychology

FROM : Enoch Mafuyeka  
Deputy Director: Employee Relations and Development

DATE : 05 June 2019

SUBJECT : **RESPONSE ON THE REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH ON  
TOPIC "FAMILY RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF  
UNEMPLOYMENT."**

The above matter refers to the letter received on the 06 June 2019 in which a request was made to conduct a research in the City of Johannesburg.

I, Enoch Mafuyeka, as delegated authority of the City of Johannesburg Municipality (the City), here by give permission to the primary researcher, Lesiba Sydney Monakedi, who is a student at the University of Free State the following:

- To collect and publish information about the City is publically not available, for the research project titled: family resilience in the face of unemployment;
- This authorization is based on mutual understanding that the City's name can be revealed in her/his project;
- The information provided by the employees or any other means (such as company's archived documents or reports) of the City is purely for academic purposes and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Please note that on completion of the study, a copy of the research report should be submitted to the City of Johannesburg in honour of your commitment.

The City of Johannesburg wishes you the best during the period of research.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Kind Regards

  
Enoch Mafuyeka  
Deputy Director: Employee Relations and Development  
Tel: (011) 407-7250  
Email: [Enochm@joburg.org.za](mailto:Enochm@joburg.org.za)

05/06/19

## Appendix B - Study Information Sheet

Date

February 2020

Title of the research

Perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment

Principal Investigator/Researcher's name and contact number:

Researcher: Lesiba Sydney Monakedi (Mobile: 0768467495)

Faculty and Department:

Humanities

Psychology

What is the aim/purpose of this study?

The aim of this study is to explore and investigate how unemployed family members cope and function within the constituent of resilience.

Who is doing the research?

This study will be conducted by Lesiba Sydney Monakedi, a registered Masters student (Degree code: PSMD8900 – Research Dissertation) in the Department of Psychology at the University of the Free State. The researcher's topic is *Perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment*. In addition to the data being used for the purposes of this research, the research report generated from this data may be adapted into an article and be published in a journal, or be presented as a conference paper.

How will the study be conducted?

The researcher has planned to conduct two 45–60 minutes individual semi-structured interviews (conducted in a space of six months apart) with 10 breadwinners (or key family providers) who have been unemployed for a minimum of at least six months. These interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed afterwards. Pseudonyms will be used throughout the study to protect the identity of the participants and to safeguard their privacy, and ensure their confidentiality. The interviews will take place at the participants' respective residences or at a place that is convenient for them, so that the researcher will be the one travelling.

Can participants withdraw from the study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. No incentives will be offered or coercion used in recruiting participants. Should a participant or participants agree to take part in this study, they will be provided with a copy of this information sheet and asked to sign a

written consent form. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted during February 2020 and again six months later, implying that participants should carefully consider their decision to participate in the study. Should participants not be willing to participate or withdraw from participation during the course of the study, they may do so without a reason and without facing any negative repercussions.

What are the potential benefits of taking part in this study?

The information that participants will share with the researcher, will not benefit them in any way, but will assist policy makers (the City of Johannesburg Council) to rethink best practices on the current legislations regarding unemployment. The findings of this research will further benefit unemployed families in future on how best they can cope within and across similar contexts.

Is there any anticipated inconvenience for taking part in this study?

Talking about unemployment and the related issues, as well as the adversity this has on families can come with some discomforts – especially when one has to express how they make ends meet. Should participants show some signs of emotional distress, the interview will be rescheduled to a later date that would be convenient for them. Furthermore, if deemed necessary, participants will be referred to Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg General (011- 488 4911) and/or Tembisa General Hospital (011 - 923 2000) to receive psychological services free of charge. Both hospitals are centrally located and within the reach of most participants. Furthermore, participants will be referred to Social Workers stationed at the City of Johannesburg's clinics for assistance. These clinics are within a 5 km radius in each Ward, meaning that our communities have proximal access to the facilities that offer psychological services free of charge. In the case where the participant is unable to visit the clinic because of incapacity, an internal arrangement has been/will be made with the City's Social Development department to send a Social Worker to where the participant is.

Which information will be kept confidential?

Measures will be put in place to safeguard participants' anonymity and protect them against any potential harm – thus, the information obtained from participants will be handled with the utmost confidentiality. The participants' names will be coded to protect their identity. The interviews will be audio-recorded, but the names of participants will be recorded separately so that participants are not linked to the data collected. Furthermore, the data collected will only be available to the researcher and the research supervisor/promoter. Should the data collected in this study be used in publications, articles or presentations, participants' identity will be kept anonymous.

How will the information be stored and ultimately destroyed?

Hard copies of the participants' responses will be stored in a locker cupboard/filing cabinet at the researcher's office for future research or academic purposes, while the electronic information will be stored on a password-protected computer. The data collected will be stored for a period of five years. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval, if applicable. After this period, the data will be destroyed to prevent unauthorised persons from accessing it.

Will I receive payments or any incentives for participating in this study?

There will be no form of payment, compensation or reward offered for participating in this study, that could lead to respondents giving biased answers; thus influencing the findings of the study.

How will the participants be informed of the findings/results of the study?

If you would like to be informed of the final findings of the research, please contact the researcher after the study has been completed. These findings will be made accessible to participants on request.

Contact persons

Should you have any concerns about the way in which the research was conducted, please contact the researcher or the study leader, Dr. L. Nel at: 051 401 2732/ NelLi@ufs.ac.za. Alternatively, you may contact the Secretary of the Research Ethics Committee, Ms. C. Vercueil at: 051 401 7083/vercueilcc@ufs.ac.za.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

## Appendix C: Participant Consent Form

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name) confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has explained the nature of the study, the procedures to be followed, and potential benefits as well as the anticipated inconvenience/s caused by participating in this study.

I have read (or it has been explained to me) and understood what the study is about as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and I am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from participating in the study at any time without suffering any penalties (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be used to generate a research report, and that the report can be adapted into an article to be published in a journal, or presented at a conference – and that in all instances my anonymity will be ensured.

I agree to the audio-recording of the semi-structured interview.

I have received a signed copy of the informed consent agreement.

Full Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix D: Interview Questions

First round Semi-structured interview questions

**Date:** May 2020 (First round)

**Research topic:** Perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment

No.	Questions	Participant responses
Biographical information		
1	What is your name and surname?	
2	How old are you?	
3	Which gender do you identify with?	
4	Which race do you identify with?	
5	How long have you been unemployed?	
6	Where do you reside?	
7	Please tell me about your family structure.	
8	Tell me about your previous employment.	
Family functioning and coping		
9	What is your understanding of unemployment?	
10	How does your family cope with the unemployment status?	
11	Can you tell me about your family functioning when you were employed?	
12	Do you think that things are different now that you are unemployed? Please elaborate.	
13	How does your family usually cope with negative situations?	
14	Tell me about being unemployed (generally).	
15	In South Africa, unemployment relates to financial hardships, dependence and deprivation of resources. (How do you make ends meet?)	
16	Describe your family's experiences of being unemployed. (is there any place where your family draw resources from, like extended families, community or government?) If so, what kind of resources are those?	
17	How do you resolve issues as a family when confronted with conflicts or disagreements? (is there a particular way you engage or solutions are imposed on other members)	
18	Are there any positives for your family which you think/predict may result from this unemployment status?	

Second round semi-structured interview questions

**Date:** Sep 2020 (follow-up)

**Research topic:** Perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment

No.	Questions	Participant responses
Family functioning and coping		
1	Since our last interview four month ago, will you tell me what have you been up to, especially in respect to job seeking/employment?	
2	How has your family been coping with the unemployment status? <b>So, how are things now that you are employed?</b>	
3	Since our last encounter, will you tell me where has your family been getting support or resources from? Any sort of support you may think of in order for your family to function.	
4	Do you think things ( <b>are better now that you are working?</b> ) will ever be back to normal or to a state it was when you were working? Please elaborate.	
5	How has your family been dealing with issues, especially grievances and or conflicts?	
6	How have you been treating each other as family members, just general?	
7	How will you therefore describe your family`s coping mechanisms?	
8	Are there any positives for your family which you think/predict may result from this unemployment status?	
9	What lessons have you learned throughout this unemployment?	
10	What message can you give to other families who are in a similar situation as yours, being unemployed?	

## Appendix E: Priori Codes

### CODING MANUAL

“Perspective on family resilience in the face of unemployment”

Template of codes

Code 1	
Label	Meaning making
Definition	Making sense of a crisis or adverse situation and bestow it with meaning
Description	When family members` subjective appraisal of their situation. Also, when they reorganize adversity as a challenge that is meaningful, comprehensible and manageable to address
Code 2	
Label	Positive outlook
Definition	The ability to regenerate hope from despair in order to see possibilities, by tapping into potential resources while striving to surmount obstacles
Description	Holding of positive illusions, encouraged, focusing on potential and affirmed strengths. A family that has hope, taking active initiatives and preservation by acknowledging that some of the things cannot be changed while tolerating uncertainty. Hope enhancement features.
Code 3	
Label	Transcendence and spirituality
Definition	Larger societal beliefs, practices and values which provide meaning and purpose beyond an individual and family`s immediate plight
Description	Connections with religious, cultural and spiritual traditions, especially when confronted with adversity or barriers. Spiritual resources, through deep faith, practices such as prayer and meditation and congregation involvement.
Code 4	
Label	Flexibility
Definition	Openness to adaptive change to meet new challenges.
Description	Reorganizing oneself against the current adversity for continuity, predictability and dependability. Buffering and counterbalance disruptive changes with an effort to restore stability.
Code 5	
Label	Connectedness
Definition	Mutual support, teamwork and commitment to alleviate adverse situation together or collaboratively
Description	Respecting individual needs, differences and boundaries. Shared issues requiring a corporative and collective response in order to foster resilience. Pursuing reconnections and reconciliations after undergoing through challenging situations with the aim to repair grievances.

Code 6	
Label	Kin, social support and economic resources
Definition	Mobilizing extended kin, social and community networks to enhance resilience.
Description	Surviving through the emotional support from external family, social grants from government and the community members. Building financial security and navigating stressful work and or family challenges.
Code 7	
Label	Clear information
Definition	Engaging through clear and consistent messages to facilitate effective family functioning.
Description	Clarification and sharing of crucial information about grievances, adverse situation and future expectations.
Code 8	
Label	Emotional sharing
Definition	Open communication supported by a climate of mutual trust, empathy and tolerance for differences.
Description	Sharing of painful feelings such as sadness, suffering, anger and fear with the aim to find an amicable way forward.
Code 9	
Label	Collaborative problem solving
Definition	Sharing decision making and conflict management through negotiating differences with fairness and reciprocity over time.
Description	Collaborative repair of conflicts and negotiating peace in fairness. Collaborative brainstorming, proactive stance by engaging in planning and prevention strategies.

## Appendix F: Ethical Approval



### GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

21-May-2020

Dear Mr Monakedi, Lesiba LS

#### Application Approved

Research Project Title:

**Perspectives on family resilience in the face of unemployment**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2019/1463/1103**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

**Prof Derek Litthauer**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

205 Nelson Mandela  
Drive  
Park West  
Bloemfontein 9301  
South Africa

P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein 9300  
Tel: 051 401 9398 /  
7619 / 3682  
[RIMS@UFS.ac.za](mailto:RIMS@UFS.ac.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)

