

**PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE LEARNING AMONG
BASOTHO LEARNERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN A RURAL HIGH
SCHOOL**

By

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

DBE-Department of Basic Education

DoE- Department of Education

EA- Education Assistant

PMT- Protection Motivation Theory

SBST-School Based Support Team

SGB- School Governing Body

SMT- School Management Team

ABSTRACT

The learning process is built on decisions and constant assessments obtained from what is learned and how it is learned, the support given to access knowledge or concepts, and whether what is remembered by the learner is correct. However, this learning process was disrupted by the Corona virus disease 2019 (COVID-19) lockdown regulations that were put in place under the auspices of the World Health Organization, in order to curb the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on teachers and learners' mental health which prevented effective learning.

The primary aim of this study was to explore the psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. A literature review gave the background to an observed inquiry using a qualitative approach. Case study design was chosen for this study, since it permitted the researcher to explore the experiences of various stakeholders during the COVID-19 pandemic era of the Basotho learners within their real-world context and collect data on how they make sense of their experiences.

A rural high school was purposively chosen as a research site, together with the four learners, four parents or guardians, four teachers, School Governing Body, School Based Support Team and School Management Team members. Data was generated through in-depth interviews and thoroughly analyzed. Narrative analysis was used to analyse the data collected through in-depth interviews. Data was organised through the use of thematic analysis. The study employed interpretivism paradigm. The Protection Motivation Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory constitute the theoretical frameworks of the study.

The research concluded that psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic era ranged from panic behaviour, or collective hysteria to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation, which were associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behaviour. It also triggered a wide variety of psychological problems, such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression which disturbed effective learning. The research also concluded that learners' reactions to the challenges they faced in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District rural high school and their strategies and remedies to the challenges show that they value teaching and learning. The learners'

strategies and efforts to solve the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic in the rural high school also enhanced teaching and learning.

Keywords: Psychosocial factors, Effective learning, Basotho learners, Rural high school, COVID-19 pandemic

CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher outlined the background of the study in relation to psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic era. Further, this chapter presented the study's problem statement, research questions, aim and objectives of the study, rationale of the study, overview of research methodology, definition of the keywords and dissertation outline.

1.2 Background of the study

The education standard in the rural areas is mostly reported low due to schools' geographical location and endeavours of education. This was by the emergence of COVID-19, culminating in the immediate shutdown of schools to curb its spread. According to Soderstrom and Bjork (2015), the main purpose of instruction should be facilitating long-term learning, with the ultimate goal of creating permanent changes in comprehension, understanding, and skills that will support long-term retention and knowledge transfer. Moreover, Bjork, Dunlosky, and Kornell (2013) state that effective learning entails ensuring accurate assessments of how well one's learning goals have been met and responding appropriately to those assessments. The learning process is built on decisions and constant assessments obtained from what is learned and how it is learned, the support given to access knowledge or concepts, and whether what is remembered by the learner is correct. However, regardless of teachers' efforts to make learning effective, some psychosocial factors prevented learning effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Onyema, Eucheria, Obafemi, Sen, Atonye, Sharma and Alsayed (2020) noted that the COVID-19 pandemic posed serious challenges to global education systems. Furthermore, Jha (2020) asserts that many psychological problems and mental health issues that include stress, anxiety, depression, frustration and uncertainty during that were linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, Serafini, Parmigiani, Amerio, Aguglia, Sher and Amore's (2020) study revealed many psychological problems and important consequences in terms of mental health, including stress, anxiety, depression, frustration, and uncertainty at the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic era. Jha (2020) posits that if learning is paused during a learning programme, chances are high that learners may fail to see themselves as learners.

1.3 Problem statement

The ability to learn effectively deteriorates as psychosocial factors keep weighing on learners and negatively impact their learning. The COVID-19 pandemic had a huge impact on the learning processes, with learners already struggling to learn affected more than before as teaching and learning was shut down during the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. COVID-19 has also triggered various psychological problems, such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression (Qiu, Shen, Zhao, Wang, Xie, and Xu, 2020). In addition, the accelerated spread of COVID-19 and its outcomes around the world has engendered fear, panic, concern, and anxiety among people (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2020).

Consequently, a new way of learning was introduced upon the reopening of schools, which reduced contact time in order to curb the spread of COVID-19. Rural high school learners experienced psychosocial factors that badly affect their learning processes and continue to suffer as the Department of Education does not provide the schools with professional help to the learners during “the new norm”. The COVID-19 pandemic strained teaching and learning as it bred anxious teachers and learners. The Department of Education received poor results and high failure rates. This would lead to more school dropouts, high teenage pregnancies, and high crime rates in the communities.

Some scholars argued that if schools were closed longer, there would likely be more dropouts (Buckler Chamberlain, Stutchbury and Hedge, 2020). Furthermore, Onyema *et al.* (2020) stated that if pupils were not actively involved in learning, it may culminate in inactivity, which may cause young engagement in crimes, a loss of interest in learning, and subpar academic achievement. Particularly for kids with special needs or those with learning issues, who frequently require extra physical attention and assistance from the teachers, it can impact the quality of teaching, learning, and academic progress. Moreover, Cao *et al.*'s (2020: 4) study stated that “multivariate logistic regression analysis suggested that living in urban areas, in contrast to rural areas, was conducive to reducing the anxiety of college students.” The economic, cultural, and educational resources imbalance between urban and rural areas might explain this. Similarly, the health conditions in cities are better than in towns and villages, which lowers the possibility of virus survival. Thus, shutting down schools and re-opening schools where learning takes place regularly with reduced contact time negatively influence

effective learning among Basotho learners during the COVID-19 pandemic in rural high schools.

1.4 Research questions

The main research question is:

1. What psychosocial factors influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The sub-research questions are:

2. What challenges in effective learning do Basotho learners in a rural high school faced during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What strategies helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome these challenges to enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

The main aim of this study is:

1. To determine the psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sub-research aims are:

2. To explore the challenges in effective learning that Basotho learners in a rural high school faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. To explore the strategies that can helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges to enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.6 Rationale of the study

i Self

As a teacher in a Full-Service School (FSS), the researcher observed that psychosocial factors add to the learning barriers that the learners already face and increase their stress levels since the results get poorer year by year. Regardless of these challenges, the Department of Education expects teachers to produce good results, an expectation that strains the teachers. Thus, this study helps the various stakeholders to comprehend the challenges that Basotho learners in rural high schools face and the strategies that can help them overcome these challenges to enhance effective learning during the emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic and curb poor performance.

ii **Reality**

Effective learning is the ultimate goal of the South African Department of Education. However, this ultimate goal was affected during the COVID-19 pandemic as formal learning was suspended and teaching and learning styles were changed. To retain this goal among Basotho learners in a rural high school, psychosocial factors influencing effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 era should be identified and dealt with. Contemporary scholars have also revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively influenced effective learning in the South African education system by posing several psychosocial challenges in schools. Thus, rural high school Basotho learners faced psychosocial challenges that must be examined to clearly understand their impact and strategies that can be employed to solve them.

Therefore, it is important to explore the psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 era and the stakeholders' challenges. This would equip educational stakeholders with the relevant information to mitigate the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic in the education system. This will help to promote effective learning. This study also reviewed the literature on psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 era. The aim was to explore the challenges that Basotho learners in rural high school settings face to enhance effective learning during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Special attention was also focused on exploring the strategies that can help Basotho learners in rural high school settings to overcome their challenges and enhance effective learning during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the main research question that guided the study was; *what psychosocial factors influence effective*

learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic? The sub-questions were: (i) what challenges do Basotho learners in a rural high school face for effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic? (ii) what strategies can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome these challenges to enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

To answer the above questions, the study sought to identify the psychosocial factors and explore the challenges that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, this study sought to explore the strategies that can help Basotho learners in rural high school settings to overcome these challenges. Some of the strategies were reflected on in the literature review. Therefore, this study aims to explore the psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning and identify the challenges and strategies that can help to overcome those challenges and enhance effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study harnessed all educational stakeholders in the country, from parents, teachers, SMT, SGB, SBST, and the educational management in the district, the Department of Education, and the learners.

iii Gaps in literature

The study sought to make recommendations that the DOE and DOH can employ in future when pandemics arise. The researcher identified the gap in literature referring to psychosocial factors that influence effective learning and explore the challenges and strategies that can help to overcome those challenges to enhance effective learning among Basotho learners in rural high school settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, identifying the psychosocial factors that influence effective learning and the challenges and strategies that can help overcome those challenges to enhance effective learning among Basotho learners in rural high school settings during the COVID-19 pandemic is valuable.

1.7 Overview of research methodology

1.7.1 Qualitative approach

According to Cropley (2015:8), qualitative research “is based on the fundamental idea that “reality” is subjective: Every human being constructs an individual, personal view of the world based on his or her specific interactions with the external world (including the people who are part of this world). As a result, much of what a person, including researchers, regards as reality consists of a set of impressions, inferences, and opinions in the person’s mind.” The study adopted a qualitative research approach to gather information about the participants’ perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it affects their psychosocial well-being and teaching and learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school.

1.7.2 Interpretivism as a paradigm in this study

Rehman and Alharthi (2016:55) note that “... interpretivists believe in socially constructed multiple realities. Truth and reality are created, not discovered. It is not possible to know reality as it is because our senses always mediate it. Interpretive epistemology is subjective. External reality cannot be directly accessible to observers without being contaminated by their worldviews, concepts, backgrounds etc.” This study used interpretivism to understand participants' interpretations of the social phenomenon they interact with, the COVID-19 pandemic, and how it affected their psychosocial well-being, teaching, and learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school.

1.7.3 Case study design

A case study can be defined as an empirical inquiry that investigates a current phenomenon in detail and within its practical context (Hollweck, 2016). Moreover, case study research has a useful and permissible part in doing evaluations. Thus, the case study was used in this study for evaluation. It was also used to capture the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic, including determining the psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 era, as well as exploring the challenges and strategies that can help Basotho learners overcome these challenges to enhance effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.7.4 Instruments

In this study, the researcher employed in-depth semi-structured interviews. Roller and Lavrakas (2015) cited in Roller (2020:3), state that the advantages or strengths of the in-depth interview (IDI) method manifest in three key areas: (1) the interviewer-interviewee relationship, (2) the interview itself, and (3) the analytical component of the process. Thus, the close interviewer-interviewee relationship reduces response bias and increases data credibility. Another in-depth strength is the interview flexibility format which allows follow-up questions that stimulate subconscious recall. The last key strength is an interviewer-interviewee relationship with in-depth techniques that allow data to be analysed and produce rich details that assist with the root of narrative interpretation.

This data collection method made it easy for the researcher to get rich data from the interviewee. This is because the interviews were conducted one-on-one between the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher also asked probing questions based on the interviewees' responses as the interviewer-interviewee relationship gets established during the in-depth interview. Thus, the minimum interview session lasted for twenty minutes. However, in cases where the researcher got interesting information the interview was allowed to take more than twenty minutes. Therefore, the interview was conducted in the selected Basotho rural high school. During the interview, the interviewer adhered to COVID-19 protocols, which involved maintaining a 1.5-meter social distance, sanitising every twenty minutes for twenty seconds, and wearing masks throughout the interview.

1.7.5 Data collection procedure

The study comprised 15 participants (n=15) who included four Basotho learners (n=4), four teachers (n=4), a School Governing Body (SGB) member (n=1), a School-Based Support Team (SBST) member (n=1), four parents or guardians of Basotho learners (n=4), and one School Management Team (SMT) member (n=1) from a rural high school in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District, Free State province.

Purposive and convenience sampling methods were used in this study to select participants. According to Etikan and Bala (2017), purposive sampling is based on the researcher's assessment of who will provide the most reliable information to achieve the study's objectives. To gather the necessary data and select participants who were prepared to share it, the

researcher must concentrate on those who share their viewpoints. On the other hand, Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016:2) state that Convenience samples are also referred to as "accidental samples" since components may be chosen for the sample because they are physically or administratively close to the location where the researcher is gathering data.

The study comprised 15 participants who included Basotho learners, teachers, SGB member, SBST member, parents or guardians of Basotho learners, and SMT member from a rural high school in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District, Free State. The participants helped the researcher gain more insight into how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected teaching and learning as they are the people in charge of promoting effective learning. The participants provided the researcher with empirical data that assisted in determining the psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school. Further, participants assisted the researcher in exploring the challenges that Basotho learners in rural high school face and the strategies that could help Basotho learners overcome those challenges to enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants used their home language, which is Sesotho.

1.7.6 Data analysis

The narrative technique was used to analyse qualitative data in this study. Sarah and Ann (2008) describe narrative analysis as a method used to analyse interview data that aims to comprehend how and why interview subjects describe their lives as a story or set of stories. Issues with identity and interactions between the narrator and the audience are inextricably linked to this. The narrative analysis helped the researcher understand how the COVID-19 pandemic is perceived in the education sector and its impact on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school. Also, through the participants' stories and COVID-19 experiences, the researcher was able to determine the psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19, as well as to explore the challenges that Basotho learners in a rural high school face and the strategies that can help Basotho learners overcome these challenges for effective learning.

1.7.7 Credibility and trustworthiness

According to Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen and Kyngäs (2014), the trustworthiness of narrative analysis results depends on the availability of rich, appropriate,

and well-saturated data. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and result reporting go hand in hand.

On the other hand, Korstjens and Moser (2018) define credibility as the degree of trust that can be put in the accuracy of the findings.

For the trustworthiness of this study, credibility is ensured by engaging with the data collected from participants. This was done intensively to illustrate a clear connection between the original data analysis and participants' original views interpretations. Also, improving the trustworthiness of content analysis begins with thorough preparation prior to the study and data collection can be verified by providing precise details of the sampling method and participants' descriptions.

1.7.8 Ethical considerations

In this study, ethical considerations mean giving and selecting participants fairly within the identified school. The study conducted interviews with respect and gave participants consent forms. In the case of minors, permission was obtained from their parents, who were assured that they could withdraw from the study anytime they felt uncomfortable with the questions. As part of ethical considerations, this study did not misinterpret participants' experiences and manipulate data. Also, before in-depth interviews were conducted, permission was requested from Thabo Mofutsanyana District and the researcher waited for approval. Furthermore, at the selected school, the researcher sought permission to collect data from the school principal or head of department. In addition, the researcher also asked for permission from the university before conducting the study. Furthermore, the researcher applied for ethical clearance before conducting the study.

1.7.9 Definition of keywords

(i) Effective learning

Effective learning is a process that changes an individual due to the experience. It involves an individual change due to the individual's insights, behavior, perception, or motivation resulting in knowledge addition or the individual being able to do things they could not do before knowledge gain (Tshiredo, 2013). In this study, effective learning occurs in normal physical space where learners and teachers engage in a lesson together so that peer learning occurs.

(ii) COVID-19 pandemic

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), was “a newly emerged respiratory disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which has recently become a pandemic” (Cao, 2020:269). The COVID-19 pandemic is a respiratory disease that negatively impacted peoples’ lives, resulting in people suffering from mental illnesses from social isolation, job loss and sudden learning change.

(iii) Psychosocial factors

According to AlAzzam, Abuhammad, Abdalrahim and Hamdan-Mansour (2021:2), high school adolescents are more susceptible than ever to social and psychological disorders due to developmental and intellectual demands. In this study, psychosocial factors affected learners’ mental state, such as social isolation, depression, loneliness, stress anxiety, and panic disorder.

(iv) Basotho learners

Basotho learners are the learners whose language is Sesotho (Ralejoe, 2021). In this study, Basotho learners refer to learners born in Sesotho-speaking families raised following Basotho culture.

(v) Rural high school

Rural high schools serve many minority learners from families with little educational backgrounds (Shikalepo, 2020). In this study, rural high school refers to a high school situated in a rural area with a large number of learners from families with limited educational resources and knowledge to help with effective learning.

1.8 Outline of the dissertation

The study has five chapters which are as follows:

Chapter 1: General introduction to the study

Chapter 1 of the study includes the introduction and background, problem statement, research questions, aim and objectives, the study, the value of the study, definition of terms, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 is the literature review. It includes an introduction, a review of extant literature, a theoretical framework, and a conclusion.

Chapter 3: Research methodology overview

This chapter consists of research methodology overview. This chapter includes introduction, overview of the methodology, research questions, research paradigm, research design, research instrument, data collection procedure, data analysis and conclusion.

Chapter 4: Data analysis and narrative analysis

Chapter 4 consists of analysis and presentation of data. The chapter includes introduction, findings and conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, interpretation, recommendations, limitations and conclusion

The last chapter in this dissertation consists of a summary, implications, and outcomes. It also includes discussion, interpretation, recommendations, limitations and conclusion.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter is the introduction to the current study. The study background and purpose were presented, together with the research questions. Also, the study's rationale and problem statement were stated. The chapter also presented the layout of the dissertation. The next chapter covers the review of related literature.

The next chapter discusses (i) Psychological factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in COVID-19 pandemic at a rural high school, (ii) Challenges that Basotho learners faced for an effective learning among Basotho learners in COVID-19 pandemic at a rural high school and (iii) The strategies that can help Basotho learners to overcome these challenges and enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 era at a rural high school.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed the literature about psychological factors that influence effective learning among learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges that learners face for effective learning in the COVID-19 pandemic era in rural high schools and the strategies that can help learners overcome these challenges to enhance effective learning in the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter also, presented the study's theoretical frameworks: Protection Motivation Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory.

2.2 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system in South Africa

Omodan (2020) states that the South African education system was affected by the sudden shutdown that not only affects higher education but also primary and secondary education were caught in the same imbroglio. According to Miguel, Robledo, Lapada and Alam (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all aspects of life, including education, and creating health concerns around the world. Also, Spaul and van der Berg (2020) mentioned that in addition to raising health issues worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic affected all facets of life, including education. Further, Bozkurt *et al.* (2020) noted that teaching essentially stopped for the remaining 80% of learners in South Africa. Overcrowding is a fact of life in many, if not most, of these schools; most classrooms have 40–50 learners or more, and learners are obliged to share desks and textbooks (if available). For numerous teachers working in these schools, every day is merely a matter of survival, trying to teach the learners in environments that are not favorable to teaching or learning. They were barely able to think and generate new ideas for their work.

Therefore, little or no teaching took place for the huge majority of the South African learners during the lockdown. Schools worldwide had to suddenly closed down, necessitating the unforeseen adoption of uncommon online teaching and learning as a plan to continue with teaching and learning. Understandably, this circumstance could harm learning and intensify the reality of deteriorating emotional well-being among the school-going population. Moreover, Lephoto (2021) posited that the COVID-19 pandemic has broken educational systems, notably the teaching and learning process and school life in general. In addition,

Gustafsson and Deliwe (2020) argued that because disruptions cause learners to forget some of what they have already learned, the evidence strongly implies that learning losses, at least as measured shortly after the disruption, was greater than what is implied by actual days missed.

Pitikoe *et al.* (2021) stated that technology could close the current gaps and be crucial in educating future generations. The educator's position must evolve because access to the most recent information is only a mouse click away. However, Spaul and van der Berg (2020) argued that during the lockdown "plans" for learning were not lessened, hence the losses in learning for children who did not have appropriate technology-enabled learning at home, in addition to the reality that most parents and caregivers were not qualified or equipped to teach their children. Furthermore, this pandemic has unfolded imbalances and by highlighting the weaknesses in the global education systems, it is likely that developed countries will recover more quickly than less developed countries (Tarricone, Mestan, and Teo, 2021).

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic serves as a

“wakeup call for all those involved in education to strive towards collective meaning making of how schools can effectively strengthen and utilize available resources such as teachers’ basic guidance and counselling skills to respond to the challenge of declining emotional well-being among learners” (Lepphoto, 2021:46).

In addition, Mahaye (2020) state that while the disruption of the curriculum could take a long time to recover from, the permanent damage includes the possibility that some students would never return to the classroom even after the illness outbreak is contained. However, Makgahlela, Mothiba, Mokwena and Mphekgwana (2021) argued that even when the COVID-19 pandemic is managed, some children might never return to the classroom, which would be permanent damage even though the interruption of the curriculum may take a long time to recover from. Also, Mahaye (2020) argued that schools were supposed to be shuttered in order to effectively enforce social distance until each government is confident that the pandemic has been sufficiently contained for the protection of students and instructors. Moreover, Olawale, Mutongoza, Adu and Omodan (2021) study revealed that schools must be closed until each government is certain that the pandemic has been properly limited for the protection of students and instructors in order to enforce social distance successfully.

2.3 Psychosocial factors affecting effective learning among learners during the Covid-19 era

According to Akat and Karataş (2020), pandemics are diseases that kill millions of people and significantly harm society's psychological well-being. Jha (2020) noted that generalized fear and pervasive community anxiety, which are typically linked to disease outbreaks and increased with the escalation of new cases along with insufficient anxiety-provoking information that was provided by the media, are common psychological reactions related to the mass quarantine that was imposed to slow the spread of COVID-19. Generalised fear and widespread community anxiety, which are frequently linked to disease outbreaks and increased with the escalation of new cases along with inadequate anxiety-provoking information which was provided by the media, are common psychological reactions related to the mass quarantine which was imposed to attenuate the COVID-19 spread. Also, a wide variety of psychological problems, such as 'panic disorder, anxiety, and depression' was triggered (Qiu *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, Akat and Karataş (2020:2) argued that “young people are thought to have psychological consequences such as loneliness, depression, anger, pessimism, and hopelessness.” The increasing spread of COVID-19 and its outcomes throughout the world has caused people to "fear, panic, concern, and anxiety" (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2020).

A common psychological response to the mass quarantine implemented to slow the COVID19 spread is widespread community anxiety and generalized fear, which are frequently linked to disease outbreaks and worsened with the escalation of new cases and insufficient anxiety provoking information provided by the media. This could be explained by the inequality of economic, cultural, and educational resources between urban and rural areas. Similarly, the health conditions in cities are finer than in towns and villages, which reduces the possibility of surviving the virus.

2.4 Challenges that learners faced for effective learning during the COVID-19 era in rural high schools

The worldwide coronavirus-related disturbance has "given educators (limited) time to rethink the sector and come up with alternatives to face-to-face instruction" (Pitikoe, Ferreira-Meyers, Bhebhe and Dlamini-Zwane, 2021:66). In addition, Chandra (2020:230) noted that “the COVID-19 pandemic is accompanied with strictly following isolation measures that have led learners and educators to confine at their homes; a disturbing social life and learning at

isolation has made it stressful for students and educators.” The teachers and learners miss the mere reality of group learning and classroom activities. All this caused both teachers and learners to experience stress. Spending all the time at home and reduced physical activity negatively impacted on effective learning. Onyema *et al.* (2020) stated that the coronavirus pandemic created multiple issues that reduced educational opportunities for rural and underprivileged students in the education sector.

Furthermore, Onyema *et al.* (2020) argued that if children are not actively involved in their learning, it may result in inactivity, which may cause young engagement in crimes, lack of interest in learning, and subpar academic achievement. It may impact academic progress, particularly for learners with special needs or those who struggle with learning and regularly need extra hands-on support from teachers. Since schools no longer provide enough in-person instruction, Akat and Karataş (2020) wrote that students' learning and social relationships are negatively affected when school closures take longer. A similar statement is made by Drane, Vernon, and O'Shea (2020), who claimed that losing school connectivity due to school closures may enhance the risk of educational disengagement, especially for vulnerable young people. This is even worse for kids in foster care or who frequently go between homes or residences since education is the only thing that never changes for many of them.

Furthermore, according to Drane *et al.* (2020) as learners lost school connectedness due to being physically removed from school or having to maintain a social distance from teachers and peers, there was a sense that adults and/or peers in their school were no longer concerned about them as an individual or concerned about their learning. Further, Bozkurt *et al.* (2020) noted that the school is frequently the only place these students feel secure, stable, and protected. To show their students that they cared, some of these poorer schools tried to stay in touch with them.

Further consequences of learning off-site affected children's emotional safety, as schools might render a safe and nurturing haven for many learners while physical and social isolation might refuse them this emotional refuge. Likewise, Arslan, Yıldırım and Zangeneh (2021) stated that school closure appeared to have a significant negative effect on students' psychological health because it physically cut off pupils from their peers and larger social network. On the other

hand, Suryaman, Cahyono, Muliensyah, Bustani, Suryani, Fahlevi, Pramono, Purwanto, Purba,

Munthe, Juliana and Harimurti (2020:525) stated that “during the pandemic, schools are closed but the learning process must continue.”

However, in education, learning was done at home (learning from home). While the issues of inclusion and equity continued to be a challenge in the education sector, the decision to continue the education program was supported (Pitikoe *et al.*, 2021). Nurunnabi, Hossain, Chinna, Sundarassen, Khoshaim, Kamaludin, Baloch, Sukayt and Shan’s (2020) study revealed that the study participants reported that during the epidemic, online teaching was being used by the majority of their school or academic unit. According to Alipio (2020), this meant learning outside a traditional classroom using electronic technologies to access educational content.

However, this learning method was still difficult because learners still did not get enough help with their schoolwork instead "assignments given to learners are not entirely done by learners themselves as there is parental interference in the assignment process” (Suryaman et al. 2020:528). Bozkurt *et al.* (2020:45) argued that this is because “firstly, many parents were working from home and so did not have the time to be available to assist with these online classes and secondly, the parents were not always *au fait* with the content of the work, particularly in a subject like mathematics.”

Moreover, Hebebcı, Bertiz, and Alan (2020:278) research stated that, “students who were not satisfied with distance education explained the reason for their dissatisfaction as a result of not understanding the subject, finding the teacher inadequate, inadequate time, and lack of infrastructure.” Suryaman *et al.* (2020:525) argued that

“although formally educational activities can still be done online, because students must study at home, character education during this pandemic has become a little neglected. Formerly, when learning activities were carried out in schools, character education was carried out under the teacher's or lecturer's direct supervision. Activities that support character education can also be carried out directly, intensively and the level of success can be measured.”

The main things of character education in indoor learning are teacher's body language, facial expressions and voice.

In addition, Pitikoe *et al.* (2021:68) postulated that “the closure meant that learners were to stay and study at home, much to the dismay of the learners who had grown intimate with the traditional classroom approach.” Also, Okocha (2020) cited in Pitikoe *et al.* (2021:67) also revealed that “most developing countries lacked adequate planning, adequate teacher training, and expertise for the introduction of ICTs in schools.” Similarly, Pitikoe *et al.* (2021:66) argue that recent studies such as Habibu, Clement, and Mamun (2012), Ghavifekr, Kunjappan, Ramasamy, and Anthony (2016), Alkahtani (2017), and AzziHuck and Shmis (2020) “all analysed different developing countries and came to similar conclusions, namely that these nations lack infrastructure, expertise, and motivation to implement technology integration in the education system.”

Wu, Xu, Yao, Zhang, Guo, Fan and Chen (2020:1) noted that “since COVID-19 is highly infectious, and there is still a lack of effective treatment means, the core of prevention is to reduce the crowd gathering.” Moreover, Wu *et al.* (2020) stated that parents and children were required to work and study at home during a protracted period of house quarantine under the direction of the central policy. Parents and children were restricted to small space. Pitikoe *et al.* (2021:69) noted that “this new education dimension also landed on the parents, who had to become the immediate support structure for their children.”

In addition, Yates, Starkey, Egerton and Flueggen (2020:12) stated that finding the motivation to complete studies amid the uncertainties of the global situation was the most difficult aspect of working from home. Many learners reported struggling to find the intrinsic motivation to study in the absence of the extrinsic motivators of school, routine, sanctions, resources, and easy access to teacher and peer support. Pitikoe *et al.* (2021) added that disrupting the relationship between students and educators was inevitable because of the pandemic in the process. The interaction between these two parties about academic matters is crucial to learners' academic success. Some learners come from low-income families with scant parental support, while others lack independent-thinking skills and lack resilience. Consequently, Buckler *et al.* (2020) argued that more drop-outs happen when schools are closed for longer periods.

2.5 Strategies to overcome learners' challenges to enhance effective learning in the COVID-19 era in rural high schools

As the teachers reviewed the structure of learning to be “given to today’s learners, there was also a need to examine the equity of instruction in developing countries” (Pitikoe *et al.*, 2021:67).

Hebebcı, Bertiz, and Alan (2020:267) noted that “due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, many countries around the world have had to interrupt educational activities or develop different alternatives in a very short time.” Bozkurt *et al.* (2020:47) stated that

“the Department of Basic Education has released a statement that all schooling will recommence at the end of May (only grades 7 and 12) with the other grades being absorbed in at varying times. The emphasis on the reopening policy is to ensure that the infrastructure is safe – there are guidelines for installing water tanks, additional desks, hand sanitizers and masks and temperature detectors.”

Suryaman *et al.* (2020) stated that the COVID-19 epidemic impacted various areas, including education, student learning, and parent-student relationships. This impact could not be stopped as a teacher who is charged with educating pupils. Teachers needed to develop effective strategies for fostering both academic and socio-emotional learning. The purpose behind this important and immediate move included an "attempt to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 disruptions on the school calendar and also to safeguard learners' rights to education" (Pitikoe *et al.*, 2021:71).

Arslan (2020:7) stated that “it is imperative to comprehend the protective and mitigating elements to create effective preventative and intervention methods for enhancing people's mental health and well-being in the context of the coronavirus pandemic's experiences”. Drane *et al.* (2020) stated that the risk of educational disengagement could be countered, for example, by maintaining meaningful connection between schools and families. In the case of schools, integrating parents in this process enabled the development of a more thorough and all-encompassing collaboration. Similarly, Nurunnabi *et al.* (2020) stated that coping strategies for COVID-19 cannot be short term. It can take a while before other COVID-19 waves appear.

Moreover, Nurunnabi *et al.* (2020) noted that mental health was a crucial factor in coping mechanisms during COVID-19 in China. To deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, it emerged that different age groups had different mental challenges. Cao *et al.* (2020) stated that social support not only lessened the psychological strain during epidemics but also modified people's attitudes toward such support and other ways of getting assistance. When faced with public health problems, learners' mental health was profoundly impacted, necessitating the attention, assistance, and support of society, families, and institutions of higher learning. It was recommended that the government and educational institutions work together to find a solution so that college students could access timely, high-quality psychological assistance geared toward crises. Pitikoe *et al.* (2021) stated that the last area to think about was social presence, which focused on building a learning community where students engaged with the material in a social setting. The teacher's job was to direct the conversation and offer feedback on the students' contributions. Arslan *et al.* (2021) stated that

“considering the adverse mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns on psychosocial adjustment, it is indispensable that effectual public health interventions in the school context are designed to support college belongingness and promote psychological adjustment during and after the COVID-19 health crisis.”

Cruz *et al.* (2020) and Peterson (2015, cited in Arslan *et al.* (2021:2) explained psychological adjustment as “one’s subjective sense of distress and the degree to which they function in daily life.”

2.6 Theoretical framework

2.6.1 Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)

The study employs Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) and self-efficacy theory. Protection Motivation and Self-efficacy theories were useful in this study because they discussed how people cognitively perceived threats and mastered coping strategies. Both theories helped the researcher understand participants' COVID-19 pandemic perceptions on effective learning and the strategies they used to cope with challenges for effective learning that were brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.6.2 Background of the theory

According to the original formulation of Protection Motivation Theory (Rogers, 1975:93), “a fear appeal communication initiates cognitive appraisal processes concerning (a) the noxiousness or severity of the threatened event, (b) the probability of the occurrence of the event, and (c) the efficacy of a recommended coping response.” Moreover, Rogers states that “these cognitive processes mediate the persuasive effects of a fear appeal by arousing protection motivation, an intervening variable that arouses, sustains, and directs activity to protect the self from danger.” However, “the revised theory attempts to offer a more comprehensive model by incorporating self-efficacy expectancy (Bandura, 1977) as a fourth cognitive mediating process” (Maddux and Rogers, 1983:470).

Further, Maddux and Rogers (1983) noted that according to the theory, an expectation of mastery or effective coping could be broken down into two separate ones: an outcome expectation, or the conviction that a particular behavior would or wouldn't produce a particular result, and an expectation of one's competence, or self-efficacy. Moreover, Wurtele and Maddux (1987:454) argued that in its present form, PMT is best understood as a model of health decision-making rather than a model of fear's impacts. It has usually been utilised to understand protective behaviors that people may adopt to decrease the perceived threat of pandemic diseases in different fields such as health, education, and psychology (Baghianimoghadam *et al.*, 2014; Williams *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, Clubb and Hinkle (2015:2) stated that according to PMT, individual cognitive processes moderated the impact of contextual and individual elements that could either promote or dissuade people from engaging in protective behaviors.

2.6.3 Assumptions of the study

According to Sommestad, Karlzén and Hallberg (2015:1), “Protection Motivation Theory posits that individuals form their behaviour from a cost-benefit analysis where risks associated with the behaviour are compared to the costs of trying to reduce or eliminate the risks.” Moreover, Sommestad *et al.* (2015:2) stated that “the PMT has been developed to explain how fear appeals influence voluntary behavioural intentions related to the health.” Furthermore, van Bavel, Rodríguez-Priego, Vila and Briggs (2019:30) noted that PMT “posits that, when facing a threatening event, people conduct two appraisal processes: one focused on the threat

itself and the other on their ability to act against that threat (threat appraisal and coping appraisal, respectively).” This affected their intention to take preventive action, resulting in adaptive or maladaptive behaviours vis-à-vis the threat. In addition, Tsai, Jiang, Alhabash, LaRose, Rifon, and Cotten (2016:3) stated that “PMT proposes that protective behaviour is motivated by threat and coping appraisals.” Therefore, this influenced how high people set their goals and tackled challenges.

2.6.4 Relevance to the study

According to Adom, Hussein and Agyem (2018:438), “theoretical framework guides the researcher so that s/he would not deviate from the confines of the accepted theories to make his/her final contribution scholarly and academic”. The theoretical framework guided and resonated with every aspect of the research process, from the definition of the problem, literature survey, methodology, presentation and discussion of the findings, and the conclusions drawn.

This study used Protection Motivation Theory. Protective Motivation Theory has generally been used to explain how fear appeals affected voluntarily chosen health-related behaviors (Sommetstad *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, van Bavel, Rodríguez-Priego, Vila and Briggs (2019:30) noted that Protection Motivation Theory suggested that people engage in two appraisal processes when faced with a threatening event: one focused on the threat itself and the other on their capacity to act against that threat (threat appraisal and coping appraisal, respectively). Furthermore, Sommetstad, Karlzén and Hallberg (2015:1), stated that according to the "Protection Motivation Theory," people base their decisions on a cost-benefit analysis that weighs the risks associated with a behavior against the expenses involved in attempting to lower or eliminate those risks. Therefore, Protection Motivation Theory helped the educators, SGB, SMT, SBST, parents and learners in the rural high school take necessary precautions against COVID-19, understanding that their behaviour would protect them against contracting the virus. Protection Motivation Theory also helped the educators, SGB, SMT, SBST, parents and learners in a rural high school adhere to the coping strategies that the Department of Education or Department of Health has put forth to help them cope and overcome the psychosocial factors the pandemic has brought upon them and on teaching and learning. Thus, Protection Motivation Theory provided a theory-driven approach to this study and explained

the study's significance and validity. Also, Protection Motivation Theory gave this study a well-defined, proven basis for argument.

2.7 Self-efficacy Theory

2.7.1 Background of the theory

Maddux (1987:54) stated that “people tend to engage in behaviors that they believe will get them what they want and they believe that they can do”. Also, Maddux, Norton and Stoltenberg (1986:783) noted that “a person's expectation of mastery or coping can be broken down into two related expectations: self-efficacy and outcome expectations”. A self-efficacy expectation is a belief that a person is or is not capable of performing the required behaviour. Self-efficacy theory could be seen as related to the greater family of psychological theories, often referred to as expectancy-value theories. These theories preserved the tendency to perform a behaviour as the result of the reinforcement value of the expected outcome and the expectation that a specified behaviour would produce that outcome. Moreover, according to Schwarzer (2016) study self-efficacy affected the effort one put forth to change risky behavior and the perseverance to continue striving despite obstacles and setbacks that may undermine motivation". This has an impact on how high people set their goals and tackled challenges. Furthermore, Schwarzer (2016) stated that self-efficacy assesses a greater and more stable sense of personal ability to successfully deal with stressful situations.

2.7.2 Assumptions of the study

On the other hand, according to Schwarzer (2016:1) “self-efficacy influences the effort one puts forth to change risk behaviour and the persistence to continue striving despite barriers and setbacks that may undermine motivation”. This influenced how high people set their goals and tackled challenges.

2.7.3 Relevance to the study

According to Adom, Hussein and Agyem (2018), the theoretical framework is the base for research. Moreover, the theoretical framework served as the research's focus and was linked to the research problem under study. Therefore, it guided a researcher's research design and data analysis plan. The theoretical framework, thus, aided the researcher in finding an appropriate research approach, analytical tools and procedures for her research inquiry.

The study used self-efficacy theory as the second theoretical framework. Schwarzer (2016) noted that self-efficacy affected the effort one put forth to change risky behavior and the persistence to continue striving despite obstacles and setbacks that may undermine motivation according to research. In addition, Maddux, Norton and Stoltenberg (1986) noted that according to this theory, a person's expectation of mastery or coping could be broken down into two related expectations: self-efficacy and outcome expectations. A self-efficacy expectation is the belief that a person is or is not capable of performing the required behavior. Moreover, Maddux (1987:54) state that “people frequently act in ways that they think would help them acquire what they want and are capable of doing”. Therefore, self-efficacy helped the educators, SGB, SMT, SBST, parents and learners in the rural high school take necessary precautionary measures against COVID-19, understanding that their behaviour will protect them against contracting the virus. Both theories would also help the educators, SGB, SMT, SBST, parents and learners in rural high schools adhere to the coping strategies that the Department of Education or Department of Health has put forth to help them cope and overcome the psychosocial factors the pandemic has brought upon them and on teaching and learning. Thus, through this study self-efficacy theory showed where the researcher intended to fill gaps in knowledge and practice.

The study employed both the Protection Motivation Theory and Self-Efficacy theory. Both theories guided the study and provided an informed, well-driven, and proven argument. Both theories helped the researcher to understand participants’ perceptions on effective learning and the strategies they used to cope with challenges for effective learning that were brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, Basotho learners experience psychosocial factors influencing effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the Department of Health and Department of Education developed strategies to help Basotho learners overcome the challenges for effective learning in the COVID-19 pandemic in a rural high school. These strategies help with continuous learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, offering containment of the COVID-19 disease spread. Furthermore, the strategies that were put in place by the Department of Health together with the Department of Education seem to focus only on covering curriculum that

was missed during teaching and learning and focused less on promoting healthy psych of the learners for their mental health to help carry them throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the next chapter, the researcher discusses the research approach, research paradigm, data collection, sampling procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability), and ethical considerations that the researcher employed in data collection.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher presented the literature review and theoretical framework of the study. This chapter presented the research approach, research paradigm, data collection, sampling procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability), and ethical considerations that the researcher employed in data collection. Thus, the researcher explains thoroughly the procedure by which the study was conducted at an identified rural high school, including the data collection procedure and how participants were selected. Also, the chapter explained how ethical considerations guided the researcher in semi-structured interviews with the research participants.

3.2 Research approach

Qualitative research focuses on understanding meaning (Hignett and McDermott, 2013). Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their world and interpret and experience different events. Alase (2017) noted that the qualitative research approach infuses an added advantage to the exploratory capability researchers need to explore and investigate their research studies. The qualitative methodology enabled researchers to develop and apply their subjectivity and interpersonal skills to their exploratory research processes. Moreover, Creswell (2009), cited in Thanh and Thanh (2015), stated that qualitative research is a way to discover and comprehend the significance that certain people or groups assign to social or human issues.

Furthermore, as Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:40) stated that, “qualitative research seeks to provide an explicit understanding of a phenomenon based on one’s experiencing it with less generalization.” Also, Liu (2016) argued that through its conclusions, it aimed to define and thoroughly grasp social reality. In other words, it is more interested in the broad structures of social behaviors. Therefore, the study used qualitative research to generate information about the participant’s perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it affected their psychosocial wellbeing, and teaching and learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school.

3.3 Research paradigm

This study employed the interpretivism paradigm. Pham (2018) noted that interpretivists adapt a relativist ontology where a single phenomenon may have multiple interpretations rather than a truth that a measurement process can establish.

According to Thanh and Thanh (2015:24), the interpretivist paradigm allowed researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants, according to theory. Furthermore, they contend that interpretive researchers do not seek the answers for their studies in rigid ways (Thanh and Thanh, 2015:25). Instead, the researchers approach reality from the subjects' experiences, from people who own their experiences and are of a particular group or culture. Hence, researchers' primary goals in the interpretive paradigm are to get "insight" and "in-depth" knowledge (Thanh and Thanh, 2015:26). This study utilised the interpretive paradigm to understand participants' interpretations of the social phenomena they interact with, the COVID-19 pandemic, how it affects their psychosocial wellbeing, and teaching and learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school. Moreover, Alharahsheh and Pius (2020:41) noted that interpretivism is concerned with deep variables and factors that are related to a context considering humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena.

3.4 Research design

This study adopted a case study design. The case study is a type of systemic reality in which the whole and its components have tight and interconnected interactions, is often presented as a "holistic" exercise (Dumez, 2015:51). What is common in case studies is the use of multiple methods to allow for an in-depth examination of a complex singularity, often a person or program, in its natural setting (Pearson, Albon, and Hubball, 2015).

According to Miles (2015:310), "case study methodology enables the generation of data using various processes from various sources". A case study offers context-specific knowledge and practice stories that are compiled from the voices, deeds, interactions, and inventions of the site's practice carriers. Miles (2015) further noted that the phenomenon or event under investigation in a case study occurs and is a matter of actual practice. Consequently, a case study entailed investigating the practices of the persons involved. Case studies were often

considered non-experimental because there is no direct control or manipulation of the independent and dependent variables.

A case study was used in this study for evaluation. Also, it was used to capture the complexity of the COVID-19 pandemic, including determining the psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the case study explored the challenges and the strategies that helped Basotho learners overcome identified challenges to enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.5 Data collection method

In-depth interviews were conducted in this study to generate data. The in-depth interview highly relied on the natural interactions between researchers and participants (Liu, 2016). Furthermore, Liu (2016:132) asserted in his study that in-depth interviews offered better access to the participants' different inner knowledge, positions, and feelings about their learning experiences through real discussions and helped avoid constituting an incomplete understanding of those perceptions. In-depth interviewing, or one-on-one interviewing, is a method of extracting more detailed information or a deep understanding of a subject or concept (Showkat and Parveen, 2017). Additionally, Showkat and Parveen (2017:6) averred that in-depth interviews are used to explore concepts for further investigation and descriptive analysis.

This data collection method made it easy for the researcher to get rich data from the interviewees. One in-depth interview session was conducted with each participant, and lasted for an average of 20 minutes. This was because the interviews were done one-on-one between the interviewer and interviewee. Also, it allowed the researcher to ask probing questions based on the interviewees' responses as the interviewer-interviewee relationship was established. The interviewer asked the participants interview questions that included three open-ended research questions: (i) What psychosocial factors influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic? (ii) What challenges do Basotho learners at a rural high school face for effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic? (iii) What strategies can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome these challenges to enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

3.6 Data collection instrument

The researcher did thorough research on her scope of study and observed the research gap on psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher focused on extracting the knowledge about psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the researcher used in-depth interviews to obtain rich data from participants. This research instrument allowed the researcher to control the interview sessions. It allowed the participants to fully pour out their lived experiences about the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning.

The research gap allowed the researcher to observe the need to identify a rural high school where learners from the Sesotho culture dominate. The school is situated in QwaQwa Motampelong village. The school enrolls learners from grade 8 to grade 12. This rural high school has 800 enrolled learners with three clerks, a cleaner and a caretaker. The principal and deputy principal of the school are both males. The school has 21 teachers, of which three are Departmental Heads of Languages, Sciences, and Commerce. Also, the school has a functioning School Governing Body. However, its School Based Support Team is partially functional.

Therefore, the research site was convenient for the study due to its location and the number of learners enrolled. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the way of learning had to change because of the implementation of safety measures. The school itself did not have enough classes and furniture, which heavily impacted effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the fact that most learners had rural backgrounds with unemployed parents and guardians greatly impacted effective learning.

3.7 Data collection procedure

Before generating data at a selected rural high school, the researcher called to set an appointment with the principal to ask permission to conduct the study at that school. The date was agreed upon, and the meeting occurred between the school principal and the researcher. During this meeting, the researcher was given a platform to present her research proposal and asked to come and collect data from that school. The principal agreed to the researcher's plea and granted her permission. The principal set a date, and the researcher came and presented

the study's objectives and benefits to the school and the participants. The researcher asked participants to volunteer to take part in the study. Then, interested participants met individually with the researcher on agreed dates and times that suited their availability. Four teachers and four learners met at the schools in the staffroom. The school principal organised a meeting between the parents and the researcher. Then, the researcher went on to identify the parents or guardians of the learners from selected high schools and presented the study's objectives and asked interested parents to participate. Meetings with guardians and parents took place at the parents' houses during weekends, depending on availability. Before the commencement of the interviews, participants signed consent forms.

3.8 Selection of participants

The sample study comprised fifteen participants (n=15), four Basotho learners, four teachers, one School Governing Body member, one School-Based Support Team member, four parents or guardians of Basotho learners, and one School Management Team member. All participants were from a rural high school in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District, Free State. Their culture was Sesotho, and their home language was Sesotho. Their age ranged between sixteen and fifty-four years old, and there were two males and thirteen female participants. All teachers were seven, and their professional qualifications were Bachelor of Education degree, Post Graduate Certificate in Education and Bachelor of Education Honours degree.

Participants were selected through purposive and convenience samplings in this study. According to Andrade (2021:87), research conducted on convenience samples can only be generalized to the population that was conveniently accessible from which the sample was drawn. In a purposive sample, the dominant characteristics are defined for a purpose relevant to the study. The results suitable to subpopulations can be determined through convenience and purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques. Purposive sampling that is also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling, relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied" (Sharma 2017; Rai and Thapa 2020). Moreover, Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016:2) noted that the purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling "is the deliberate choice of a participant

due to the qualities the participant possesses”. Also, they note that convenience sampling is affordable and accessible, and the subjects are readily available.

Furthermore, Taherdoost (2016: 22) averted that sampling frequently assists in overcoming many of the research's inherent constraints. Moreover, Etikan and Bala (2017: 1) argued that sampling as a strategy is based on who will provide the best information to succeed for the objectives study. Purposive and convenience sampling were used because it allowed the researcher to decide which Basotho rural high school was convenient for the study. It also provided participants with the qualities the researcher was looking for. The participants helped the researcher gain more insight into how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected teaching and learning, as they are the people in charge of promoting effective learning. The participants also provided the researcher with empirical data that assisted the researcher in determining the psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school. Participants also assisted the researcher in exploring the challenges and strategies that can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome identified challenges to enhance effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.9 Data analysis

This study employed a narrative analysis as a technique to analyse qualitative data. According to Akinsanya and Bach (2014), a narrative is a story containing a sequence of events, meaning that narratives take place within, on time, some period. Moreover, McAlpine (2016) stated that an evaluative conclusion, complicating events, temporality, social context, and other elements are all included in tales to create a cohesive story because narratives are crucial to human culture because they frequently demonstrate the principles that our culture teaches less formally and with greater enjoyment.

The narrative analysis was used to help the researcher understand how the COVID-19 pandemic was perceived in the education sector and its impact on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school. Further, through the participants’ stories of COVID-19 experiences, the researcher determined the psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher was able to explore the challenges that Basotho learners in a rural high school face

and the strategies that helped Basotho learners overcome those challenges to enhance effective learning.

McAllum, Fox, Simpson, and Unson (2019) noted that narrative analysis is a great choice for looking at how people make sense of events and change because it emphasizes the fragmented, yet malleable and inherently social process of meaning-making and reality construction. Moreover, Ntinda (2018) explained that narrative analysis has its methodology which entails analysis of data in search for individual narrative accounts by the researcher (mainly have to do with commonalities in and across texts), narrative threads (core emerging themes), and temporal/spatial themes (present and future contexts). Therefore, a narrative's meaning is derived from its plot, which chronologically and sequentially arranges events and assigns people to certain roles, creating a whole whose constituent parts are interdependent to make sense (McAllum *et al.*, 2019).

Thus, the researcher explored potentially available data in a rural Basotho high school. Also, the researcher delved into the participants' backgrounds to fully understand the effect of their perception of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning. The researcher eventually considered thoroughly diverse interpretations of extracted data during data synthesis or information integration.

3.10 Trustworthiness

According to Elo, Kääriäinen, Kanste, Pölkki, Utriainen, and Kyngäs (2014), improving the trustworthiness of content analysis begins with thorough preparation before the study. It requires advanced skills in data gathering, content analysis, trustworthiness discussion, and result reporting. The trustworthiness of data collection can be verified by providing precise details of the sampling method and participants' descriptions. In addition, Stewart, Gapp, and Harwood (2017:20) noted that “trustworthiness is emphasized with detailed and thick description of accounts completed from the planning stages through to the reassembling of interviews and observations”. Also, continual review and revisiting of the research questions ensure a focus is maintained. Therefore, the study relied on four general criteria in the approach to trustworthiness. These are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.10.1 Credibility

According to Korstjens and Moser (2018:121), credibility in trustworthiness “establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants’ original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants’ original views”. Moreover, Mamba (2019) argued that credibility is how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of the research study’s findings, that is, the certainty that can be set in the reality of the research findings. It is also a way to know the researcher’s findings are true and accurate. However, “truth derives from the participant’s lived experiences, which does not necessarily lead to universal truths, but rather an in-depth understanding of that person’s unique reality” (Lemon and Hayes, 2020:605).

The researcher ensured credibility in trustworthiness through the representation and interpretation of participants’ original data. The researcher understood that the findings were based on the participants' experiences. The participants' interpretation of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning, therefore, provided in-depth understanding.

3.10.2 Transferability

Stahl and King (2020:27) argue that “just as it is valid and important to create new knowledge from emergent discovery-oriented qualitative research, it is also productive to seek understanding from others’ systematic qualitative inquiry.” Thus, the researcher read other studies conducted on the effect of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of people and then sought to expand by transferring other researchers’ findings from the context of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on the wellbeing of people to its influence on effective learning. The researcher created new knowledge by focusing on psychosocial factors influencing effectiveness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.10.3 Dependability

Stahl and King (2020) state that qualitative research is research; there are a few specific research techniques that produce trust and feel trustworthy when they are carried out, in which researchers, both producers and consumers, actively establish their faith in the events as they happen. To ensure dependability, the researcher gave her field notes to her supervisor to read with his knowledge of research interpretations, thus creating reality understanding and confirmation for the researcher.

3.10.4 Confirmability

According to Stahl and King (2020), some objective reality is required to audit someone's research. The researcher, instead of creating a reality in findings, pursued objectivity. Thus, relying on constructs such as delicacy and exactness in other researchers' involvement in her research practice. Therefore, the researcher aimed for neutrality throughout the data collection process and interpretation.

3.11 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have a particular resonance in a qualitative study due to the extensive nature of the study process (Arifin, 2018). The researcher explained the purpose of the study and data collection procedure to the identified school, and potential participants were allowed to volunteer. Participants were given the platform to ask questions about the study. Then, participants were required to sign consent forms before the in-depth interviews proceeded. For minors, permission was obtained from their parents or guardians.

It was also explained to participants that they were allowed to withdraw from the study whenever they felt uncomfortable with the questions they were asked. The researcher asked for participants' consent to note their answers throughout the interview. The researcher did not reveal participants' names and identities during data collection, data analysis, and reporting of study findings to ensure participants' anonymity and confidentiality. Every in-depth interview was individually conducted in the quiet private office. At parents' and guardians' homes, participants were asked to provide private space before the interviews began.

The researcher sought ethical approval from the research ethics committee board, and it was granted. Participants were informed of additional readily available support should they need it. All participants were informed about the counselling psychologist who was available from the Department of Health. This study did not manipulate data and misinterpret participants' experiences as part of ethical considerations.

Also, before in-depth interviews were conducted, permission was requested from Thabo Mofutsanyana District, and the researcher waited for approval to be granted. Furthermore, at the selected school, the researcher requested permission to generate data from the school principal or departmental head. In addition, the researcher also asked for permission from the

university before conducting the study. The participants also signed consent forms before taking part in the study.

3.12 Limitations of the study

According to Dimitrios and Antigoni (2019), limitations of any study concern potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher's control and are closely associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, funding constraints, or other factors. In this respect, a limitation is an 'imposed' restriction that is essentially out of the researcher's control. Still, it may affect the study design, results, and conclusions and should be acknowledged clearly in the study when submitted. The research was based on a purposive and convenience sample obtained from a single rural high school and so there can be no generalizations made about the population since it focused only on Basotho learners and not the entire school population. The number of learners was limited to four and therefore it was a restricted research. The willingness of the learners, parents or guardians, teachers, SGB, SMT and SBST to participate in the study was voluntary. Interview sessions between the researcher and the participants took place at a convenient time for the participants and the researcher. However, there was a potential for some teachers and parents not to feel free to express their views due to the fear of being recorded.

3.13 Conclusion

In conclusion, the qualitative research method infuses an added advantage to the exploratory capability researchers need to explore and investigate their research studies. This research method allowed the researcher to explore and understand the meaning rural Basotho high school learners, parents or guardians, teachers, SGB, SMT and SBST members had on the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning. Furthermore, this research method aims to provide the researcher with a specific understanding of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning based on perceptions of rural Basotho high school learners with less generalization. In the next chapter, the researcher presents and analyses the data generated during in-depth interviews.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the methodology was presented. The data on psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic was generated. The narrative analysis was done, whereby the responses of learners, parents or guardians, teachers, School Governing Body (SGB) members, School Management Team (SMT) members, and School Based Support Team (SBST) members on psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic were analyzed. The analysis helped clearly interpret how the participants perceived the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.2 Biographical data

The table below presents the biographical data of the first group of participants comprising learners at the rural Basotho high school.

4.2.1 Learners

Table 4.1: Learners

Participants	Gender	Age	Home language	Grade Level	Culture	Residential areas	Living with (parents, guardians,...)	Travel to school
Participant 1	Female	17	Sesotho	11	Sesotho	Kudumane Village	Parents	Walk
Participant 2	Female	17	Sesotho	12	Sesotho	Paballong Village	Parents	Walk
Participant 3	Female	19	Sesotho	11	Sesotho	Monontsha Village	Guardians	Walk
Participant 4	Male	16	Sesotho	11	Sesotho	Paballong Village	Guardians	Walk

Source: Author

(i) Kudumane village: This was a small village below the mountain beside the river. It had one intermediate school named Kgotsoong Intermediate. It had poor road infrastructure, and residents were provided with clean running water by Maluti-A-Phofung municipality. During electricity power cuts, villagers fetched wood from the mountain to make fire and cook. **(ii) Paballong village:** This small village had one primary school. It had gravel roads with a lot of RDP houses. Most residents could not afford to pay for municipal services and had bridged the electricity. Maluti-A-Phofung municipal supplied the villagers with clean running water, even though the municipal frequently cut the water supply and sent Jojo trucks to supply the villagers with clean water.

(iii) Monontsha village: This was an average village below the mountain. It had a Basotho historic cave named Wetsies Cave. It had poor road infrastructure, and services were supplied by Maluti-A-Phofung municipal. The village had a clinic (Monontsha), three primary schools (Thejane, Monontsha, and Thebe ya Kgomo), and one high school (Sekgutlong).

(i) Participant 1

Participant 1 was a seventeen-year-old female learner who was in grade 11. Her highest level of education was grade 10. She lived in Kudumane Village in QwaQwa. Also, she was a Sesotho-speaking person who learned in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. She was from the Sesotho culture.

(ii) Participant 2

Participant 2 was a seventeen-year-old female learner who was in grade 12. Her highest level of education was grade 11. She lived in Paballong village in QwaQwa. Also, she was a Sesotho speaking person who learned in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. She was from Sesotho culture.

(iii) Participant 3

Participant 3 was a nineteen-year-old female learner who was in grade 11. Her highest level of education was grade 10. She lived in Monontsha village in QwaQwa. Also, she was a Sesotho speaking person who learned in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. She was from the Sesotho culture.

(iv) Participant 4

Participant 4 was a sixteen years old male learner who was in grade 11. His highest level of education was grade 10. He lived in Paballong village in QwaQwa. Also, she was a Sesotho speaking person who learned in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. He was from the Sesotho culture.

4.2.2 From parents and guardians

The table below presents the biographical data of the second group of participants, which are the parents and guardians of the learners at the rural Basotho high school.

Table 4.2: Parents and guardians

Participants	Gender	Age	Home Language	Highest level of education	Culture	Residential areas	Marital status	Employed Yes/not
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Participant 5	Female	43	Sesotho	12	Sesotho	Mantsubise Village	Single	Not employed
Participant 6	Female	54	Sesotho	8	Sesotho	Leribe Village	Married	Not employed
Participant 7	Female	52	Sesotho	10	Sesotho	Leribe Village	Married	Not employed
Participant 8	Female	36	Sesotho	11	Sesotho	Leribe Village	Single	Not employed

Source: Author

(i) Mantsubise village

This was a small village below the mountain next to the river. It had three schools, two recently closed (Sebatatso and Mantsubise) and one still operating (Namoha Primary). It had poor road infrastructure, and its services were provided by Maluti-A-Phofung municipal.

(ii) Leribe village

This was a small village with one primary school (Naka). It had poor road infrastructure. Most villagers were unemployed and could not afford to pay for municipal services. The village had a lot of school dropouts.

(i) Participant 5

Participant 5 was a forty-three years old female parent of a grade 12 learner. Her highest level of education was grade 12. She lived in Mantsubise village. Also, she was a Sesotho-speaking person who was unemployed. She was also from the Sesotho culture.

(ii) Participant 6

Participant 6 was a fifty-four years old female parent of a grade 12 learner. Her highest level of education was grade 8. She lived in Leribe village. Also, she was a Sesotho-speaking person who was unemployed. She was also from the Sesotho culture.

(iii) Participant 7

Participant 7 was a 52 years old female parent of a grade 9 learner. Her highest level of education was grade 10. She lived in Leribe village. She was a Sesotho-speaking person who was unemployed. She was also from the Sesotho culture.

(iv) Participant 8

Participant 8 was a 36 years old female parent of a grade 10 learner. Her highest level of education was grade 11. She lived in Leribe village. She was a Sesotho-speaking person who was unemployed. She was also from the Sesotho culture.

4.2.3 From teachers

The table below presents the biographical data of the third group of participants, which are the teachers of learners at the rural Basotho high school.

Table 4.3: Teachers

Participants	Gender	Age	Home Language	Teaching Grade Level	Teaching subjects	Highest level of education	Teaching experience	Culture	Residential areas
Participant 9	Female	28	Sesotho	10, 11 & 12	Geography	B.Ed.	Six years	Sesotho	Bolata Village
Participant 10	Female	27	Sesotho	11 & 12	English	B.Ed. Hons	Three years	Sesotho	Phuthaditjhaba
Participant 11	Female	26	Sesotho	8, 10 & 11	Business Studies	PGCE	Two years	Sesotho	Bluegumbosch
Participant 12	Female	32	Sesotho	10, 11 & 12	Life Orientation	PGCE	Six years	Sesotho	Makwane Village

Source: Author

B.Ed

This stands for a Bachelor of Education degree, and the first-degree one can acquire to be a qualified educator.

(ii) B.Ed. Hons: This stands for Bachelor of Education Honours degree, a second degree in Education faculty that exposes students to research-based work.

(iii) PGCE: This stands for Post Graduate Certificate in Education, a certificate acquired post-bachelor non-education degree that permits one to be an educator.

(i) Bolata village: This small village had many school dropouts. It had poor infrastructure.

(ii) Phuthaditjhaba: This was a town situated in the middle of QwaQwa. It had illegal dumping sites in almost every corner. Most of the residents had built rooms to rent in their backyards. It had poor road infrastructure. The area was suitable for business. The residents paid for municipal services. The town had several schools and a stadium.

(iii) Bluegumbosch: This was a place that had several subsections. Residents paid for their municipal services. Residents had built beautiful houses for themselves in the larger subsections. However, there were some subsections where residents lived in two-room houses. The place had several schools and a stadium.

(iv) Makwane village: This was a big area that had poor road infrastructure. Most of the residents could not afford to pay for municipal services. It had several school dropouts. The area had several schools and Makwane Dam that supplied other areas with water.

(i) Participant 9

Participant 9 was a 29-year-old female teacher teaching grades 10, 11, and 12. Her highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education Degree and she was a qualified teacher who had been teaching for six years. Also, she was a Sesotho-speaking person who worked in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. She was also from a Sesotho culture.

(ii) Participant 10

Participant 10 was a 27 years old female teacher who was teaching grade 11 and 12. Her highest qualification was Bachelor of Education Honours and she was a qualified teacher who

had been teaching for 3 years. Also, she was a Sesotho speaking person who worked in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. She was also from a Sesotho culture.

(iii) Participant 11

Participant 11 was a 26 years old female teacher who was teaching grade 8, 10 and 11. Her highest qualification was a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and she was a qualified teacher who had been teaching for 3 years. Further, she was a Sesotho-speaking person who worked in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. She was also from a Sesotho culture.

(iv) Participant 12

Participant 12 was a 32 years old female teacher who was teaching grade 10, 11 and 12. Her highest qualification was a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and she was a qualified teacher who had been teaching for 6 years. She was a Sesotho speaking person who worked in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District. She was also from a Sesotho culture.

4.2.4 From School Governing Body Member

The table below presents the biographical data of the fourth group of participants, which is the School Governing Body (SGB) of the rural Basotho high school.

Table 4.4: SGB Member

Participant	Gender	Age	Home Language	Grade Level	Teaching Grade Level	Highest level of education	Teaching Experience	Culture
Participant 13	Female	26	Sesotho	-	11 & 12	B.Ed. Degree	3 years	Sesotho

Source: Author

(i) Participant 13

Participant 13 was a 26-year-old female teacher teaching grades 11 and 12. Her highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education Degree and she was a qualified teacher who had been teaching for 3 years. She was a Sesotho-speaking person who worked in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District and an SGB teacher component member. She was also from a Sesotho culture.

4.2.5 From School-Based Support Team Member

The following table presents biographical data of the fifth group of participants which are the School Based Support Team (SBST) member of the rural Basotho high school.

Table 4.5: SBST Member

Participant	Gender	Age	Home Language	Grade Level	Teaching Grade Level	Highest level of education	Teaching Experience	Culture
Participant 14	Female	52	Sesotho	-	10 & 11	B.Ed. Honours	Eight years	Sesotho

Source: Author

(i) Participant 14

Participant 14 was a 52 years old female teacher teaching grades 10 and 11. Her highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education Honours, and she was a qualified teacher who had been teaching for eight years. Also, she was a Sesotho-speaking person who worked in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District and was an SBST coordinator at her school. She was also from a Sesotho culture.

4.2.6 School Management Team Member

The following table presents biographical data of the sixth group of participants which is the School Management Team (SMT) member of the rural Basotho high school.

Table 4.6: School Management Team Member

Participant	Gender	Age	Home Language	Grade Level	Teaching Grade Level	Highest level of education	Teaching Experience	Culture
Participant 15	Male	42	Sesotho	-	11 & 12	B.Ed. Degree	17 years	Sesotho

Source: Author

4.2.6.1 Participant 15

Participant 15 was a 42 years old male teacher teaching grades 11 and 12. His highest qualification was a Bachelor of Education Degree, and he was a qualified teacher who had been teaching for 17 years. Also, he was a Sesotho-speaking person who worked in a rural high school in Thabo Mofutsanyana District and an SMT member. He was also from a Sesotho culture.

4.3 Narrative results

4.3.1 Psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

4.3.1.1 Psychological factors

The responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic were (a) panic, fear, trauma, anxiety, helplessness, loneliness, hopelessness, worry, and depression, (b) parents could not afford online “Whatsapp” classes and learners were not consistent in attending online classes, (c) parents’ or guardians’ homes were not conducive to learning since the learners had to carry out household chores, while their siblings were always making noise disturbing their learning process, and (d) teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse.

4.3.1.1.1 Depression and Alienation

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that depression was a psychological factor that had a serious impact on effective learning among Basotho learners in a high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners felt recurrent sadness and loss of interest in their school work. They could no longer enjoy learning because they felt lost since formal education had been suspended due to COVID-19 lockdown regulations. They felt alienated from their schools since they spent most of their time at home and apart from each other. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“They felt depressed when they could not come to school and they also felt lost because they were far away from each other” (Participant 1).

“During the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was in grade 9 in 2020. I felt depressed and worried, and thought about what will happen if the days continue. On top of that I felt hopeless” (Participant 3).

“I think psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school are panic, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse” (Participant 9).

Therefore, depression is a psychological factor that negatively impacted effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners could not access teaching and learning sessions at the school, which made them feel lost and sad throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3.1.1.2 Hopelessness

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that hopelessness was another psychological factor that seriously impacted effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were no longer hopeful in their education. They could not believe that their lives would change for the better. As the result, they felt disappointed and could not be in each other's company because schools were closed down due to the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

"I felt depressed and worried and thought about what will happen when the days continue. On top of that, I felt hopeless" (Participant 3).

"Trauma, hopelessness, teenage pregnancy, absenteeism and lack of intrinsic motivation amongst others" (Participant 11).

"They felt hopeless in their education. They felt as if they were slaves at home due to the pressure they experienced" (Participant 2).

Therefore, hopelessness is a major psychological factor that had negative impact on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners lost hope in themselves and could no longer dream for a bright future.

4.3.1.1.3 Working under pressure

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that working under pressure was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners experienced a lot of stress because they had a lot of work to do, with limited contact time with their teachers. They left school feeling heavy and anxious because they had a lot of school work to do on their own. One participant shared the following:

“They felt hopeless in their education. They felt as if they were slaves at home due to the pressure they experienced” (Participant 2).

Therefore, being under pressure was a major psychological factor that had a negative impact on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were under pressure because of the huge backlog of school work, which they had to do on their own.

4.3.1.1.4 Lack of focus

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that lack of focus was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners lacked clear direction of learning. They lost a sense of purpose because they had to learn on their own and struggled to understand basic concepts, which in turn impacted on effective learning. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“Ke taba ya hore bana ne ba sa tle sekolong ka baka la “COVID-19 pandemic. Ba dutsi hae nako e telele ba arohane le matitjhere le baithuti ba bang. Ba bang ba ile ba lahla “focus” “(Learners could not go to school because of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. They stayed at home for a long period of time separated to other learners and teachers. Some of them lost focus)” (Participant 5).

“Ho ne ho le boima ho ngwana ho ipalla a le mong” (“It was challenging for her to study alone”) (Participant 7).

Therefore, lack of focus was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners struggled to understand basic concepts in their school work because they were studying alone at home.

4.3.1.1.5 Reluctance to return to school and to study

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that reluctance to return to school and to study was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners

did not want to return to school anymore after the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. This was because they had lost hope completely in their studies. They were no longer interested in schoolwork since they were now used to rotating and not attend lessons with other grades. One participant shared the following;

“Ka nako eo o ne a se a sa rate ho ka ntshetsa dithuto tsa hae pele ka baka la ho nyahama. Ha ba bang ba kgutlela sekolong o ile a kgutlela ka mora kgwedi ba bang se ba kgutletse sekolong. O ne a rata tsela a bile a sa bale ho hang. O ne a iketlile a thabela ho ba hae” (“During that period she did not like to continue with her studies because she had lost hope. She did not return back to school at the same time with others, instead she went back after a month. She was not studying at all but instead she loved roaming in the streets. She looked relaxed and enjoyed being at home”

(Participant 6).

Therefore, reluctance to return to school and continue to learn was a major psychological factor that had negative impact on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners found it hard to return to school after the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. They lost interest in schoolwork due to the learning break caused by the COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

4.3.1.1.6 Anxiety

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that anxiety was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners felt worried about their future because their learning had completely changed due to COVID-19 lockdown regulations. They were worried and uncertain about their future because they had limited contact time with their teachers and had to study on their own. The following participants shared the following;

“I think psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school are panic, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse” (Participant 9).

“Ho ne ho le boima ho ngwana ho ipalla a le mong. O ne a tshohile hoo tshebetso ya hae e ileng ya theoha sekolong” (“It was challenging for her to study alone. She was worried with the way her performance had dropped at school)” (Participant 7).

Therefore, anxiety was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were overwhelmed by excessive worry regarding their learning and future. It was hard for the learners to be calm because their changes on how they learned during the COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

4.3.1.1.7 Failure to cope with school work

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that failure to cope with school work was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most learners were unable to manage their school work. They had too much school work to do within a short period of time. They even had to attend “WhatsApp” classes which was in fact hard for them to attend since their parents did not afford to pay for their internet services or WhatsApp data bundles. One participant shared the following;

“Ngwana o ne a imetswe a hloleha ho “coper” ka ha mosebetsi wa hae wa sekolo o ne o le mo ngata empa nako a neng a e fumane diphapusing tsa borutelo e le nyane” (“He had too much schoolwork and he failed to cope with it due to lack of contact time in the classroom”)(Participant 8).

Therefore, failure to cope with school work was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners did not have enough time with their teachers and peers for effective teaching and learning. As a result, they found it hard to cope with the amount of school work they had to tackle during the COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that stress was a major psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners experienced much tension due to circumstances subjected them in their day to day learning during the era of the COVID-19

pandemic. The learners had too much school work to do on their own with limited resources. They could not interact together with their peers and assist each other in their school work. One participant shared the following;

“I think psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school are panic, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse” (Participant 9).

Therefore, stress was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners experienced much tension when carry out their school work during COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

4.3.1.1.9 Loneliness

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that loneliness was a major psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners were not allowed to sit in groups. They had to maintain social distancing at all times as a way to curb the spread of the COVID19 pandemic. They lacked social contact rewards, including contact with the more knowledgeable other. They longed for social relationships and gathering where they could study as a group. One participant shared the following;

“I think psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school are panic, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse” (Participant 9).

Therefore, loneliness was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This factor robbed the learners of the sense of belonging to their school community. The learners were no longer studying in groups any more.

4.3.1.1.10 Panic

The participants’ responses from in -depth interviews have revealed that panic was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners could not control their fear and

anxiety towards learning. They were stressed most of the time because they felt lonely and had to find alternative ways of learning without receiving formal learning at school. One participant shared the following;

“I think psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school are panic, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse” (Participant 9).

Therefore, panic was a psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Panic caused learners to lose sense of control in their learning. They were no longer able handle their school work.

4.3.1.1.11 Low self-esteem

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that low self-esteem was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were critical of themselves and what they were capable of doing in terms of their school work. They felt inadequate to pass their grades in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. They mostly ignored their positive qualities as learners. One participant shared the following;

“The psychological factors are family problems (child head family), sexual abuse, low self-esteem and depression” (Participant 10).

Therefore, low self-esteem was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. The learners were not at ease and failed to believe in themselves with regards to their school work.

4.3.1.1.12 Trauma

The participants’ responses from in -depth interviews have revealed that trauma was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners went through a disturbing experience during this period. Their parents died and some had lost employment, and the way

they learned had also changed. Thus, they were distressed physically, emotionally and mentally because of COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“The psychological factors are trauma, hopelessness, teenage pregnancy, absenteeism and lack of intrinsic motivation amongst others” (Participant 11).

Therefore, trauma was a psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners saw their parents and guardians losing work. Some lost their parents and guardians who succumbed to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, they experienced drastic change on how they had to learn during the COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

4.3.1.1.13 Lack of motivation

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that lack of motivation was a major psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were no longer passionate about learning due to the fear of contracting the COVID-19 pandemic. Their learning goal faded slowly because they felt overwhelmed and felt alone. They no longer believed in their learning abilities because they had fear and panic. One participant shared the following;

“The psychological factors are trauma, hopelessness, teenage pregnancy, absenteeism and lack of intrinsic motivation amongst others” (Participant 11).

Therefore, lack of motivation was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. The learners no longer believed that there was light at the end of the tunnel. They lost self-esteem in their learning abilities.

4.3.1.1.14 Flu infection and its symptoms anxiety

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that fear of flu infection and its symptoms was another psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were cautious of anyone showing flu symptoms. This is because flu infection and symptoms were associated with COVID-19 pandemic. They were no longer comfortable with hanging around their peers and teachers that had flu. This affected their learning because they mainly focused on doing whatever it takes to avoid being infected with COVID-19 and could not focus in class. One participant shared the following;

“The psychological factors are panic, fear of flu and its symptoms” (Participant 12).

Therefore, fear of flu infection and its symptoms was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were anxious of any one close to them who showed flu symptoms. They were afraid of contracting the Corona virus and were extra cautious whenever they were around people who had flu. This caused panic which in turn disturbed their learning.

4.3.1.1.15 Worry

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that worry was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners' minds were filled with fear of failing and contracting COVID-19. Their minds were mostly filled with problems which hindered them from realising their full potential in learning. One participant shared the following;

“The psychological factors are anxiety, worry, helplessness, hopelessness, stress and depression” (Participant 15).

Therefore, worry was a major psychological factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners had too much worry regarding their learning and struggled to manage that feeling.

4.3.1.2 Social factors

4.3.1.2.1 Home as untenable environment to learning

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that home as untenable environment to learning was a social factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners' homes were not conducive to learning because they had to carry out household chores. Their siblings made it impossible for them to study at home. Moreover, their parents could not afford to buy them WhatsApp data bundles so that they could attend online classes. One participant shared the following;

“It's difficult when you must attend online classes but your parents don't work and can't afford the classes. I also have younger siblings which are home 24/7 and always disturbing you from studying, and they sleep late at night. Also, being with your parents for a long time means that they use you for domestic chores when you must do your school work” (Participant 4).

Therefore, home as untenable environment to learning was a major social factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners' homes were not conducive to learning. Therefore, rural Basotho high school learners struggled to study at home by themselves.

4.3.1.2.2 Substance abuse

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that substance abuse was a social factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners joined antisocial groups in their areas and resorted to smoking and drinking alcohol because they spent more time at home than at school learning. They reverted to this behaviour because of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations which limited their normal school attendance. The following participants shared the following;

“Ke taba ya hore bana ne ba sa tle sekolong ka baka la “COVID-19 pandemic”. Bashemane ba iphumane ba se ba dula mekguping ba tsuba le ho nwa jwala” (“Learners could not go to school because of COVID-19 lockdown regulations. Boys found themselves affiliating to groups that smoked and drank alcohol”) (Participant 5).

“I think psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school are panic, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse” (Participant 9).

“The psychological factors are emotional, isolation from peers, violence, substance abuse and high rate of death among adults” (Participant 14).

Therefore, substance abuse was a major social factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners affiliated to antisocial groups and negatively influenced each other into smoking and drinking alcohol.

4.3.1.2.3 Engaging in early intimate relationships

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that engaging in early intimate relationships was a social factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners invested most of their times in intimate relationships. They neglected their school work and learning and focused on intimate relationships and engaged in sexual activities which resulted in teenage pregnancies. One participant shared the following;

“Ke taba ya hore bana ne ba sa tle sekolong ka baka la “COVID-19 pandemic”. Ba ile ba lebala ka taba ya sekolo mme ba ba “involved” haholo tabeng tsa marato. (“Learners could not go to school because of COVID-19 pandemic. They forgot about their school work and were involved in intimate relationships”) (Participant 5).

Therefore, engaging in early intimate relationships was a major social factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners spent much time at home without attending school and this led them to be involved in intimate teenage relationships.

4.3.1.2.4 Child-headed homes

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that child-headed homes were a social factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners lost parents due to the COVID19 pandemic. They had to assume their parents’ roles and look after their younger

siblings who relied on them for food and security. As a result, they, their performance decreased in their school work. One participant shared the following;

“The psychological factors are family problems (child head family), sexual abuse, low self-esteem and depression” (Participant 10).

Therefore, child-headed homes were a social factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners lost their guardians and parents to COVID-19 related illnesses. Therefore, they had no choice but to assume their parental roles so that their siblings are looked after.

4.3.1.2.5 Teenage pregnancy

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that teenage pregnancy was a social factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners spent their time on intimate relationships which resulted in teenage pregnancies. They were no longer attending normal school lessons. As the result, they had too much time at their disposal because they attended school few days a week due to COVID-19 regulations. The participants shared the following:

“I think psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school are panic, anxiety, stress, sadness, loneliness, depression, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse” (Participant 9).

“The psychological factors are trauma, hopelessness, teenage pregnancy, absenteeism and lack of intrinsic motivation amongst others” (Participant 11).

Therefore, teenage pregnancy was a social factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners spent most of their times outside the school premises. They invested their time in intimate relationships which then led to teenage pregnancy.

4.3.1.2.6 Social isolation

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that social isolation was a social factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were socially isolated from their peers

and educators, both emotionally and physically. They were no longer having normal teaching and learning sessions with their peers and teachers. They had to sit apart from each other in the classes, wearing masks which made them feel isolated from one another. One participant shared the following;

“Ke taba ya hore bana ne ba sa tle sekolong ka baka la “COVID-19 pandemic”. Ba dutsi hae nako e telele ba arohane le matitjhere le baithuti ba bang.” (“Learners could not go to school because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They stayed at home for a long period of time separated to other learners and teachers” (Participant 5).

Therefore, social isolation was a major social factor that negatively impacted on effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners and educators were socially isolated. They were no longer socially interacting in the way they did prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as learning together in groups. Also, the learners could not go to school regularly.

4.3.2 Experiences of Basotho learners at a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that Basotho learners in a rural high school experienced psychosocial factors influencing effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are factors are failure to cope, hopelessness, knowledge gap, household chores, loss of self-awareness, intimate relationship, limited contact learning time, unconducive learning environments (homes), mixed emotions such as sadness, loneliness, anxiety and depression, assuming parental roles, trauma, learning barrier due to wearing masks while teaching, parental neglect and rejection and peer isolation.

4.3.2.1 Failure to cope

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that failure to cope during self-study was a major factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants could not cope with their work which made them feel stressed all the time. One participant shared the following;

“Yes, I also feel depressed and worried about my education, how will I cope with schoolwork at home, because we’re forced to stay home and do homework alone without

getting help from school mates. I'm depressed because my family has trust in me; if I fail they will be very disappointed" (Participant 1).

Therefore, failure to cope was a major factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This experience made the learners lose control over their learning.

4.3.2.2 Hopelessness

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that feelings of hopelessness were a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were no longer hopeful about their future due to pressure and lack of teaching and learning contact time. One participant shared the following;

"Yes, there was hope but under certain circumstances I felt hopeless about my future and I had to study hard and undergo pressure in my studies because I am the first child in my household to be in grade 11" (Participant 2).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced hopelessness during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This experience negatively impacted on their learning because they did not know how they would overcome their learning challenges during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3.2.3 Knowledge gap

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that knowledge gap was another psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were confused and lost direction as some chapters are pre-requisite so curriculum trim cut out necessary information that build knowledge before the following chapters.

"Yes, I have experienced psychosocial factors that influenced my life and schoolwork. So grade 10 has too much work but they didn't teach us more information. In grade 11 its very difficult to study on your own the concepts that were not taught in the previous grade. Also, at home my grandmother was stressed out with her child that no longer like to attend school" (Participant 3).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced knowledge gap during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Curriculum trimming negatively impacted on the learners' learning because they passed to the next grade without being taught certain topics.

4.3.2.4 Household chores

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that doing household chores instead of school work influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This put emotional pressure on the participant and bred stress. One participant shared the following;

“Well from what I have experienced, learners were told to come twice a week to school and had a lot of schoolwork though we barely understood the lessons. I hardly got time to write my homework because my grandmother had me working most of the time so I didn't get time to study” (Participant 4).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced having to carry out household chores during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This impacted negatively on their learning because they hardly understood their school work due to limited teaching and learning time. This added stress and frustration to them.

4.3.2.5 Loss of self-awareness

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that loss of self-awareness was a major psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants felt lost in the COVID-19 pandemic and lost themselves which resulted in identity loss. One participant shared the following;

“Ba ne ba bonahala ba se ba sa itsebe hore e sa le ngwana kapa e se e le motswadi. Ba qetelletsa ba ima. Bana ba neng ba hloka ho sututswa ka morao ba ile ba lahleha haholo ka ha ba ile ba nyahamela thuto. Athe ha e le bana ba ratang sekolo ba ne ba bontsha ngongoreho, ba le bodutu ka ha ba ne ba sa kgotsofalla taba ya ho dula hae. (They could no longer identify themselves as either child or a parent. Some ended up pregnant. Those that needed teachers' support felt lost and gave up on their studies, whereas those that loved learning showed feelings of worry and loneliness because they were not happy to stay at home” (Participant 5).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced loss of self-awareness during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This negatively impacted on their learning process as they struggled to find a true sense of belonging in their school community.

4.3.2.6 Intimate relationships

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that intimate relationships and substance abuse were major factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants resorted to intimate relationships so that they could cope with the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances. One participant shared the following;

“O ne a le sehlopheng sa leshome ka nako eo. A behile marato pele ho ntho tsohle. O ne a thabela le mekgupi a hloka nako ya dibuka tsa hae tsa sekolo”. (She was in grade ten at that time. She put all her energy in intimate relationships. She enjoyed staying with groups and had no time for her schoolwork (Participant 6).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced intimate relationships during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This impacted negatively on their learning process as their focus shifted from school work to intimate relationships.

4.3.2.7 Limited contact learning time

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that limited school contact time was a major psychological factor that influenced for effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participant felt robbed off their right to education .and this was not fair to their learning. One participant shared the following;

“O ne a ikutlwa a tshohile ebile a le tlasa kगतello ka ha nako eo a neng a e fumana sekolong bakeng sa thuto e ne e sa lekana” (“She felt scared and she was under a lot of pressure because she had insufficient contact time with her teacher”) (Participant 7).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experience limited contact learning time with their peers and teachers during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This negatively impacted on their learning process due to the pressure they had on school work.

4.3.2.8 Unconducive learning environment (homes)

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that unconducive learning environment was another psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their homes were toxic towards their learning and caused frustration which hindered effective learning. Further, the conditions at home were conducive for the learners to study effectively. One participant shared the following;

“Ngwana o ne a imetswe hoo a qetelletseng a iphumana a se a tsuba ka baka la “stress” a neng na le sona ka baka la mosebetsi wa sekolo” (“He could not cope and started to smoke due to stress he had regarding his schoolwork”) (Participant 8).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced unconducive learning environment (Homes) during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This negatively impacted on their learning process because they only studied at home due to limited teaching and learning. They had nowhere else to study from.

4.3.2.9 Mixed emotions such as sadness, loneliness, anxiety and depression

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that mixed emotions were a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants felt mixed emotions from sadness, loneliness, anxiety to depression. This resulted in lack of enthusiasm to continue with school during COVID-19 pandemic. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“At my school our learners experienced many psychosocial factors during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were also affected by sadness and loneliness, that is, where drug abuse took place many even smoked dagga inside the school premises. However, that was solved by the management of the school and the disciplinary committee. We had about three learners that were admitted because of anxiety and depression because they could not cope with pressure of the work they had to do on their own” (Participant 9).

“Yes, they have. Our learners were under a lot of pressure due to the measures that were put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They showed signs of anxiety, hopelessness, helplessness and worry towards their schoolwork” (Participant 15).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced mixed emotions during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This impacted on their school work negatively because they eventually felt unstable. Their emotions overwhelmed them.

4.3.2.10 Assuming parental roles

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that assuming parental roles was a major factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The duty of assuming parental roles weighed on participant’s shoulders. There was an imbalance of responsibilities and priorities between being school learners and stepping up and being parents. The following response from in-depth interviews helps illustrate this point:

“Yes they have. Many learners here in our rural school have the responsibility of taking care of their families both physically and financially; we can say they are from child headed families. They struggle to cope at school because they keep wondering where their next meal will come from and in the worst-case scenario they began to absent themselves from school as they looked for other ways to generate income, because most of their parents have lost their jobs due to COVID-19” (Participant 10).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners were parenting their siblings during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Assuming parental responsibility negatively impacted on their learning process as it added to the stress. They had to leave their school work in order to fend for their siblings.

4.3.2.11 Trauma

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that trauma and hopelessness were other factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The updates of COVID-19 pandemic spread and death toll traumatized the participants. They could not be free totally around others and this hindered them from effective learning. One participant shared the following;

“The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a devastating global impact on our educational system for the past two years, which led to many challenges from which we have not yet recovered until now, such teenage pregnancy, rape and loss of interest in school work and dropping out of school. There is also trauma, hopelessness, teenage pregnancy, absenteeism amongst others” (Participant 11).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced trauma during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. Losing parents and guardians to the COVID-19 pandemic traumatized the learners, thus negatively affecting on their school work. They feared for their lives and future and some ended up dropping out from school.

4.3.2.12 Learning barrier due to wearing masks while teaching

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that the wearing of masks by teachers was a learning barrier that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants could no longer find learning joyful due to teachers swearing masks during contact time. They had to adjust to the circumstances while feeling confused and scared. One participant shared the following;

“Learners could not hear us clearly while we were wearing masks in my school. There was a lot of panic about the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners caused havoc when a learner had flu, and so did the teachers” (Participant 12).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced a new learning barrier since teachers were teaching while wearing masks during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This negatively impacted on the learners’ learning because they could no longer read the lips of their teachers when they were teaching.

4.3.2.13 Parental rejection and neglect

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that parental rejection and neglect was a major factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants felt like losers because they experienced rejection and neglect from their stressed parents and effective learning which made them miserable. One participant shared the following;

“Most learners don’t have healthy relationships with their parents. The lockdown exposed them and made families to spend more time together, which was at times a bad

experience. The learners felt neglected of rejected by their parents. They felt that their parents were not paying attention to them” (Participant 13).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced parental rejection and neglect during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This negatively impacted on their learning because they lacked love and nurture from their parents who were at the time stressed about losing work and fending for their children.

4.3.2.14 Peer isolation

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that peer isolation was psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants felt alone and had to endure stress alone. The participants could not rely on each other because they were trying to figure everything out. One participant shared the following;

“These learners try to find out what they can do for living and this affected their attendance at school and because their loved ones had passed away, they were not coping in the classrooms. Secondly, there is isolation from peers because their lives have changed; they are no longer living like in the past” (Participant 14).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced peer isolation during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to movement restrictions they could no longer spend time with their peers as usual and this frustrated them and negatively impacted on their learning.

4.3.3 Challenges that influenced effective learning in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic had many challenges. Those psychosocial factors included failure of learners to attend classes regularly, WhatsApp classes, absenteeism and frequent power cuts, declining performance, the learners experienced much academic pressure, inadequate curriculum coverage resulting in knowledge gap in the next grade, the learners transitioned to virtual learning and did not have data to attend virtual classes, high rate of school dropouts an suspension of effective teaching and learning techniques.

4.3.3.1 The learners failed to attend classes regularly

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that attending school few days a week was a major challenge that Basotho learners at a rural high school face during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners intimated that they failed to attend adequate normal school lessons from Monday to Friday, and instead only attended lessons twice a week due to COVID-19 regulations. The participants shared the following;

“We are coming to school twice a week and we cannot do all work for the whole week in just two days. This means that we are affected to the point that we almost fail because we are left behind. We have to study via WhatsApp (online studying) and some of us didn't have WhatsApp data bundles to do online studying” (Participant 1).

“We have to come to school twice a week but some of us come once a week and this affects us because group work was cancelled and we have to attend online classes which are not helpful because of lack of electricity. We skip some of our online classes” (Participant 2).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners failed to attend classes regularly and instead only attended lessons twice a week. This challenge negatively impacted on effective learning because the learners did not get enough teaching and learning time.

4.3.3.2 WhatsApp classes, absenteeism and frequent power cuts

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that WhatsApp classes, absenteeism and frequent power cuts were the challenges that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. WhatsApp classes thoroughly. Further, participants felt somehow responsible for frequent power cuts. The participants felt lost, sad and ashamed for failing to attend One participant shared the following;

“The challenges that I face in school work are during the day. We don't come often to school and that makes unable to complete our schoolwork. Sometimes, we don't have electricity whilst we study on online. Also, sometimes we don't have WhatsApp data bundles” (Participant 3).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners had to attend WhatsApp classes which in turn had a negative influence on effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a challenge because they missed many lessons due to frequent power cuts.

4.3.3.3 Declining performance

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that declining performance was another challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants felt like complete failures when they could not continue obtaining good grades like they normally do.

“Due to limited time of instruction in the courses, I did not cover much in my school work which caused my performance to drop down and fail in some subjects. On the other hand, teachers failed to understand why I barely wrote my school work” (Participant 4).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners' performance dropped down during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge resulted from insufficient teaching and learning time.

4.3.3.4 Academic pressure

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that much academic pressure was a major the challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants felt even more confused about their learning due to academic stress. The participants shared the following;

“Bana baka ba rata sekolo mme ba ile ba angwa haholo ke ho se ye sekolong. Ba ile ba pasa empa ba ile ba lahlehelwa ke tse ding tsa dithuto mme ba iphumana ba le ka tlasa kगतello ya mosebetsi wa sekolo nakong eo dikolo di neng di bulwa. Kelellong ha baka ba sitiseha ka ha ba ne ba thabela ho dula le nna ka ha ke ntho e neng e sa kgonahale” (“My children love learning and they were really affected by not going to school. They passed but they lost some lessons and they found themselves under a lot of pressure upon school reopening. They were not affected mentally because they enjoyed spending time with me as it was something that we hardly did during their normal school calender”) (Participant 5).

“Mosebetsi o ne ole mongata mme a ya sekolong matsatsi a leshome kgwedding. O ne a sa utlwisisi mosebetsi wa hae wa sekolo ka ha o ne a ya sekolong matsatsi a sa lekanang. O ne a ikutlwa a le tlasa kगतello e bakwang ke mosebetsi wa sekolo.O

getelletse a se a sa batle ho ya sekolong” (“There was too much schoolwork and he attended ten days a month. He did not understand his schoolwork because he did not attend school regularly. He found himself under a lot of pressure caused by immense backlog in his schoolwork. He ended up reluctant to attend school”) (Participant 8).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners were under much academic pressure during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The learners were given too many activities to complete on their own because of limited contact time with the teachers.

4.3.3.5 Inadequate curriculum coverage resulting in knowledge gap in the next grade

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that inadequate curriculum coverage resulting in knowledge gap in the next grade was a major the challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. The participants were wondering if they will be able to handle the next grade due to trimmed curriculum which resulted in knowledge gap. The participants shared the following;

“E ne e le motho ya nang le ditjhalentjhe tse ngata. O ne a bontsha a kgotsofetse. Lemong se hlahlamang e eleng sa 2021 ha ane a se a etsa sehlopha sa leshome le motso o mong o ne a lla ka ho se utlwisisi a bile a bontsha ho nyahama. Nakong eo a neng a kopa thuso ho matitjhere bakeng sa hore a fumane tlhakisetsa o ne a sa e fumane. A ne a bontsha ho fella bana pelo”. (“She had multiple challenges regarding to learning. She also showed satisfaction. The following year which was 2021, she started complaining with lack of understanding and she was discouraged. She did not receive the help she was looking for from her teachers when she needed it. The teachers showed lack of tolerance towards such learners”) (Participant 6).

“O ne a ya sekolong ha raro bekeng. O ne a fumana mosebetsi o mo ngata o imelang kelello ya hae ka baka la hore ba ne ba sa fumane nako e lekaneng ya thuto. O iphumane a se a na le kgatello ya maikutlo” (“She attended school three days a week. She had too much work because they did not get enough contact time. She did not feel well”) (Participant 7).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school fell behind on curriculum coverage that resulted in knowledge gap during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge made learning difficult in the next grade as they did not have enough basics for each lessons.

4.3.3.6 The learners transitioned to virtual learning and did not have data to attend virtual classes

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that transitioning to virtual classes and lack of data to attend virtual classes were a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were more scared of learning transition. Most of them were from poor family background and were not exposed to using smartphones. This automatically took their excitement of learning. One participant shared the following;

“The level of education had to change, pass percentages and weighting of average marks also changed. Teaching methods were transformed into virtual learning. Most of our learners come from disadvantaged background where having cell phones was not possible. Teachers had to create WhatsApp groups to share information to learners while at home but that was not possible because of most learners who do not have access to cell phones or computers at home. Even those that had cell phones had the challenge of not having enough data to download information from teachers. These challenges hindered effective learning to take place during the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. Learners failed to study online and even on their own. Most learners failed because they had to study at home without their teachers' intervention” (Participant 9).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners had to transition virtual learning of which they could not afford to attend during the COVID-19 lockdown regulations. This challenge added to the stress level that the learners already have due to COVID-19 restrictions.

4.3.3.7 Low literacy level in English language

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that low literacy level in English language was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants could not respond to questions asked in English and had low self-esteem as a result of this. One participant shared the following;

“One of the biggest challenges that the learners face is that of language. There is a language barrier. They do not fully understand English as a medium of instruction. Almost everything must be over-explained. This could be due to COVID-19 because they were not attending school every day and some aspects were trimmed in the

curriculum. This barrier prohibits effective learning as learners have low self-esteem and unable to answer the question asked” (Participant 10).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners found it hard to respond to the questions that were asked in English during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge created learning barriers, since every aspect in the curriculum had to be over-explained with limited time.

4.3.3.8 High rate of school dropouts

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that the high rate of school dropouts was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants feared for their future and lacked intrinsic motivation towards their future. One participant shared the following;

“Prior COVID-19 we could hold assembly and invite different people to come and motivate or encourage learners and provide career guidance but due to COVID-19 restrictions, public gathering had to stop. As a result, learners lost motivation of coming to school and ended dropping out of school” (Participant 11).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners dropped out of school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge was a result of rotational attendance of which they spent most of their times at home.

4.3.3.9 Hidden positive COVID-19 cases and inadequate equipment

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that hidden positive COVID-19 cases and inadequate equipment were a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants were over cautious of flu infected people and insufficient COVID-19 pandemic prevention equipment. This hindered their full participation in their learning process. One participant shared the following;

“We had a problem of kids stealing sanitisers and that brought issues as regulations were not followed properly. Also, screeners did not screen all the kids at the gate in the morning because there were too many kids and screeners could not handle them. Again, teachers had to sanitise each learner every twenty minutes for twenty seconds and this

wasted a lot of time and lessons could not be completed as a result. Moreover, learners were moved to other grades when they did not have content, which was very difficult because we had to do extra classes. Also, wearing of masks led to other learners forgetting their masks at home and had to miss out on lessons as we had to send them home. Lastly, we had the learners that tested positive and hid their results and this put others at great risk” (Participant 12).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners and their parents hid positive COVID-19 cases. This was due to anxiety of being marginalized. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic equipment was stolen and became sufficient in schools.

4.3.3.10 Suspension of effective teaching and learning techniques

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that the suspension of effective teaching and learning techniques was another challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participant was shocked on how teaching and learning had changed to accommodate the new norm which made them question their ability to learn effectively. The participants shared the following;

“Some learners learn best through lip reading, it was difficult for them as we had to wear masks. Others learn best through peer learning or group work. COVID-19 did not give them a chance them a chance to continue doing group learning because both learners and parents feared for their lives. One on one lessons with teachers were no longer possible because of the way they attended school. Our school has extra classes, it had to be cleaned and this made struggling learners be left behind” (Participant 13).

“Social distancing affected the studies of learners because they were unable to share. Those who are from poor families were unable to do group works where they applied peer learning. Also, poverty; in the rural areas people are suffering and most of the learners were depending on food that they were given at school, now because of this pandemic, most of learners were not completing the work they were supposed to complete at home” (Participant 14).

“The measures that were put in place because of the pandemic... They could not learn in pairs and groups because they had to maintain social distancing. They were not coping and struggled to complete the homework activities that teachers gave them to

do at home. They were also worried about their parents losing work because their companies could no longer afford to pay them, and their parents in turn could not afford to buy them data to attend WhatsApp classes” (Participant 15).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners experienced the suspension of effective teaching and learning techniques during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This challenge affected their learning drastically, as they could not cope with the new teaching and learning strategies that protected their health during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3.4 Strategies that helped a rural high school overcome the challenges that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that remedies and strategies were put in place to deal with psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3.4.1 Loss and lack of contact time leading to weekend and holidays classes

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that attending classes on weekends and holidays to cover lost work was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome the challenges that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared the following;

“We attended school on weekends and during school holidays to keep pace with the syllabus. We did online studying” (Participant 1).

“We went to school on weekends to cover lost work” (Participant 2).

“I received help on the weekends; we cared for our schoolwork” (Participant 3).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners had to attend school during weekends and holiday during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy was implemented as a catch-up strategy for lost work.

4.3.4.2 Finding conducive learning environment that is free from depression and promoted concentration.

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that finding conducive environment that was free from depression and promoted concentration was a strategy that

positively influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared the following;

“Since I love group work and understand or perhaps learn more effectively when working with others, I prefer to gather a few of my mates and make a study group where we will help each other with our strengths. I spend more time on my books, meaning every free time I get I study to keep up with the current lessons. Also, I had to get myself a place far from home, from all these depressions so that I can be able to concentrate when working” (Participant 4).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners had to improvise a conducive environment for learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy promoted concentration and learning.

4.3.4.3 Spending more time on their studies and seeking help

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that spending more time on studies and seeking help was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared the following;

“Ba ile ba ipha nako ba bala ho leka hore ba “cover” mosebetsi wa bona wa sekolo moo ba neng ba sa utlwisisi ba ne ba bua le matitjhere bakeng sa tlhakisetsa ka mokgwa wa “whatsapp” le ha fela ho ne ho se bonolo ka ha “data” e ne e tsamaya e fela. Athe nakong tse ding motlakase o ne o le siko mme le “network” e sokodisa. Ba ne ba thusana bo bona hobane ba babedi ebile ba kena ka phaposing e le nngwe mme ba etsa dithuto tse tshwanang”. (“They invested their time in covering their schoolwork and they asked their teachers where they did not understand via whatsapp, even though they frequently ran out of data. Sometimes there was no electricity which affected network connection badly. They worked together and it was a bit easier because they were in the same class”) (Participant 5).

“O qetelletse a ipha nako e ngata ya ho bala le ho botsa moo a neng a sa utlwisisi teng. Matitjhere le ona a ile a mo thusa bakeng sa tlhakisetsa moo a neng a sa utlwisisi teng” (“She ended spending more time studying and asking questions where she did not understand. The teachers provided her with clarity where she did not understand”) (Participant 7).

“O ne a kopa thuso ha a sa utwisisi” (“He sought assistance where he did not understand”) (Participant 8).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners sought help where they did not understand and invested most of their time in their school work during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This strategy helped them to understand their school work better.

4.3.4.4 Extra classes

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that attending extra classes was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared the following;

“Ba ile ba fumana di “extra class” tsa ha dikolo dikwetswe le “studies” tse neng di kena hoseng le ha sekolo se tswa”. (“They attended extra classes during holidays and studied before and after normal lessons”) (Participant 6).

“Extra lessons were conducted during weekends and holidays” (Participant 12).

Therefore, Basotho rural high school learners attended extra classes during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy helped learners to understand better the concepts they were taught in their normal teaching and learning sessions.

4.3.4.5 Getting enough rest and lead a healthy lifestyle

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that getting enough rest and leading a healthy lifestyle was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“To overcome stress, depression and anxiety, learners exercised regularly. They also drank more water and encouraged to have enough sleep” (Participant 9).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners had enough rest and led a healthy lifestyle during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy promoted their learning and were able to recall what they learnt better.

4.3.4.6 Use of Subject Improvement Plan (SIP) and Error Analysis

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that use of Subject Improvement Plan (SIP) and Error Analysis was a strategy that helped Basotho learners at a rural high school overcome challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“The common strategy that is used is Subject Improvement Plan (SIP). This allows teachers to identify areas for improvement which topics should be drilled into learners during extra classes and holiday classes. The second one is error analysis which is used to also identify topics learners fails mostly and that needs improvement” (Participant 10).

Therefore, Basotho learners were taught based on Subject Improvement Plan and Error Analysis during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy was implemented mostly during extra lessons to ensure that all concepts covered are well understood by learners.

4.3.4.7 Adoption new policies

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that adoption of new policies was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“Several measures were implemented for the effective learning despite the circumstances in my school. This included the attendance of learners according to groups. The strategy was to group learners into groups and rotates them in terms of attendance. The school created safe environment for the learners that experienced challenges through adjusting school-based policies to offer support to our learners without judging them especially those that were pregnant. However, we were cautious of all the risks that were associated with the pregnancy challenge” (Participant 11).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners benefitted from the adoption of new policies during era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy put in place as way to accommodate new challenges that were brought in teaching and learning by the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3.4.8 The learners resorted to virtual teaching and learning

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that resorting to virtual teaching and learning was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“At times I took my learners to the sport fields. I was the only one allowed to take off the mask, that way there was enough ventilation and everyone could take part and understand. Again, if we had a group or peer activity we would go to the hall. There is enough ventilation and enough space for social distancing. It required a lot of monitoring that everyone had their masks on, and I would get help from the EA (Education Assistant). They played a huge role in making sure that everyone follows the Covid-19 regulations. Lastly, if one on one lessons were not done, I conducted them through social media. I used WhatsApp most of the time and it helped a lot, especially for literature” (Participant 13).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners resorted to virtual teaching and learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy was used to prevent learners from losing more learning time and creating knowledge gap.

4.3.4.9 The provision of stationery, masks and food

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that the provision of stationary, masks and food was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared the following;

“Social distancing requires each child to use his or her stationery (resources). As a school we had brought those resources and every teacher who use them must sanitise them before giving to learners and because of this more classes were needed. At our school the fundraising from SGB bought corrugated iron sheets to increase the classes. Regarding poverty, when learners are at home, they come to school to collect food during during break time. Our school hired some of the parents to prepare the school garden. The vegetables from this garden were the ones that were provided to the learners. Those who live far from school were given maize and vegetable from the garden” (Participant 14).

“We worked together with SBST to help our learners cope better with the circumstances brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. We also made sure that the school provided the learners with masks and food during break time. We also, made sure that there were sanitisers available at school. We welded the tables on the floor on 1.5 cm apart to ensure social distancing. We drew other classroom rules that included COVID-19 rules. In terms of learning, we provided the learners with stationery and organised weekend and holidays classes. We went as far as creating WhatsApp groups for learning where our teachers taught and helped the learners with work they do not understand. We also planted vegetables and supplied our learners with vegetables during the era of the COVID-19” (Participant 15).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners were given stationery, masks and food at school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This strategy helps make learners feel equal and blend in with others, regardless of their home background.

4.3.5 Bits of advice learners, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT give to other learners, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT that experience similar challenges in their rural high school

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that there are psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among learners in a rural high school during COVID19 pandemic and they must come up with remedies and strategy as a response to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the strategies and remedies they came up with to ensure effective learning happens even during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic were online learning, implementation of SIP and error analysis. Also, extra classes such as weekend and holiday classes. Also, learners had their own strategies to ensure that they continue learning even when they were only going to school for few days, such as forming study groups, asking questions when they did not understand and investing more time in their education.

Even though strategies and remedies were implemented to ensure effective teaching and learning happened, tackling challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic affected them psychologically. Rural high school learners tended to feel overwhelmed as those challenges gave them pressure and made them feel discouraged, demotivated, depressed, hopeless, and anxious and even had low self-esteem. Furthermore, as much as rural high school learners experience those emotions, they somehow managed to convince themselves to strategise to ensure that they continue learning regardless of those challenges. They were even conscious of

their strengths and weaknesses through those challenges. Also, based on their experiences, learners, teachers, SGB, SMT and SBST gave to other learners, teachers, SGB, SMT and SBST that had not yet to experienced them, bits of advice about similar challenges in their rural high school

4.3.5.1 The learners should believe, have hope in themselves and be honest in their studies

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that learners should believe, have hope and be honest in their studies. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared the following;

“Have hope; believe in yourself because you are not the only person to come across such problems. Just study hard and take your work with honesty, and attend extra classes” (Participant 1).

“They should tell themselves that it is not the end of their lives. They should have hope and try not to overthink because it could lead them into depression” (Participant 2).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners should believe, be hopeful and honest with their studies during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may help make learners feel sense of belonging in their school community and help them realise how great their destinies are. They will also value peer learning.

4.3.5.2 The learners should not give up

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that learners should not give up. This could help Basotho learners in rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“I would like to advise learners to never give up because when situation is tough, they can be tougher than the situation. They must stand tall against all odds. They should tell themselves that they would rather fail than give up because giving up is the greatest failure and it ends up being a habit” (Participant 3).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners should not give up on their studies during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may help make learners feel enthusiastic towards their learning.

They may also be proud towards seeking help when they need from both their peers and teachers.

4.3.5.3 The learners should prioritise peer learning and support one another

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that learners should prioritize peer learning and support each other. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“I advise my fellow mates that they should offer as much potential as they can in their education, while they should also try to avoid any form of depression. Teamwork is a priority in this case for with one weakness there shall be strength. Therefore, if we hold on to each other and support each other we will succeed. We should all strike hard and never forget to persevere and persist no matter what life throws at us...united we proceed and together we shall rise” (Participant 4).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners should prioritize peer learning and helping each other with their studies during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may help make learners feel sense of belonging in their school community and help them realise how great their destinies are. They will also value peer learning. This is supported by Pitikoe *et al.*'s (2021: 73) study that,

“the last area for consideration is social presence whereby emphasis is on creating a community of learning where students interact with the learning content within a social group. The role of the teacher is to guide the discussion and make comments on the learners' contributions.”

4.3.5.4 Parents should support their children

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that parents should support their children's education. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“Motswadi a tshelhetse ngwana ka nako tsohle. A be le nako ya ho dula le ngwana a bue le yena mme a mo kgothatse le ho fumana maikutlo a bana. O leke ho mo thusa ho tse ding tsa dintho tseo o di utlwisisang ha a le tlasa kgatello ya ho dietsa. Batswadi

ba e le hloko hore ba se ngolle bana mesebetsi ya sekolo. Ba lokela ho etsa bo nnete ba hore ba thusa bana ka ho hlatswa diaparo le hore ebe ba jele” (“Parents should support his or her child all the time. A parent should spend time with the child and talk to the child encouraging him or her while understanding their emotions. They should try to help with some schoolwork they understand when a child is under pressure. Parents should also be aware that they should not do their child’s schoolwork on their behalf. They should make sure that they assist their children with house chores”) (Participant 5).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners should receive support from their parents during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may boost learner’s confidence because of the support they know they have from both their teachers and parents. They will feel a sense of belonging at home and school.

4.3.5.5 Parents should give their children words of encouragement

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that parents should give their children words of encouragement. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“Batswadi ba kgothatse bana. Ba ba eletse hore ba tlohelle papadi bakeng sa hoba le bokamoso bo tjabileng” (“Parents should encourage their children. They should advise them against slacking so that they can have a bright future”) (Participant 6).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners should receive word of encouragement from their parents during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may boost learner’s confidence because they know that their parents believe in them. They will feel a need to preserve and be resilient.

4.3.5.6 Learners should seek help when they do not understand

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that learners should seek help when they do not understand. This could help Basotho learners in rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“Nka kgothalletsa bana hore ba bale, a botse moo a sa utlwising. Hape a ithute ho bua le batho ka maikutlo a hae hore a kgone ho fumana dikeletso” (“I would encourage the learners to study and seek clarification where they do not understand. Also, they should learn to talk to other people about how they feel so that they can get advices”) (Participant 7).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners should seek help when they do not understand during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may spark their interest in learning and knowledge that they have people to rely on. This supports Pitikoe *et al.* (2021: 73) notion that,

“the last area for consideration is social presence whereby emphasis is on creating a community of learning where students interact with the learning content within a social group. The role of the teacher is to guide the discussion and make comments on the learners’ contributions.”

4.3.5.7 Parents should help their children with their schoolwork

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that parents should help their children with their schoolwork. This helped Basotho learners in rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“Motswadi a iphe nako a leke ho thusa ngwana le ho mo kgothalletsa hore bana babo ba mo thuse moo a sa utlwising. Motswadi a tshebetse ngwaka ka nako tsohle” (“A parent should make time and try to assist the child. A parent should encourage siblings to assist each other where the other does not understand. A parent must support the child all the time”) (Participant 8).

Therefore, Basotho high school learner’s parents should help their children with their schoolwork during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may boost learner’s confidence because of the support they know they have from both their teachers and parents. This supports Pitikoe *et al.* (2021: 69) notion that “this new education dimension also landed on the parents, who had to become the immediate support structure for their children.”

4.3.5.8 Teachers and learners should receive training regarding virtual teaching and learning

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that teachers and learners should receive training regarding virtual teaching and learning. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Teachers not using online learning system need to shape in now so that there will be no interruption in communication with their learners. Learners should be trained on the use of ICT technology they may need to use in the event of school closure. Those schools should start by practicing in the classroom and then send learners off to try using tools from home. They can even ask the district to supply tablets to learners who do not afford to buy them and the district won't regret spending on this because this type of learning will be going forward. These learners will also be prepared for tertiary education as they will be in line with changing times. The school will also have to prepare its staff (teachers) to be ready to teach online” (Participant 9).

Therefore, Basotho high school learners and teachers should receive training regarding virtual teaching and learning. This will help them transition smoothly during pandemics to come. This supports Okocha (2020) revelation cited in Pitikoe *et al.* (2021: 67) that “most developing countries lacked adequate planning, adequate teacher training, and expertise for the introduction of ICTs in schools.”

4.3.5.9 Teachers should be patient with their learners

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that teachers should be patient with their learners. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“I would advise them to be patient, understand and remember that every learner is different. With the COVID-19 outbreak, we should learn to work under provided conditions for our learners' sake. Lastly, I would advise them to talk to their learners because they are really going through a hard time and need support from them” (Participant 10).

Therefore, Basotho high school teachers should be patient with their learners during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may boost learner's confidence because of the support they know they have from both their teachers. They will feel a sense of belonging at school. This is supported by Suryaman *et al.* (2020: 529) that,

“the COVID-19 pandemic affects many things including educational life, parents of students, students and the learning process, as a teacher who has the responsibility to educate students cannot stop. Teachers must find appropriate ways to promote the learning process academically and socio-emotional.”

4.3.5.10 SBST should do background research on their learners

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that School Based Support Team (SBST) should do background research on their learners. This could help Basotho learners in rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“I would highly advise that the school must have fully functional SBST that way every teacher will have the full responsibility to complete every learner profile in order to have full background check for each learner so that as a school we can give enough support for the learners in all the learning barriers they may have, be it for learning or problems at home or whatever the child may be going through. Completing learner profile will help the teacher to know fully about the learners and their background and come up with relevant support for learners” (Participant 11).

Therefore, Basotho high school SGB should do background research on their learners during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may help them with ways they can support the learners according to their specific needs. This supports Pitikoe *et al.* (2021: 69) notion that

“... due to the pandemic in the process, interrupting the rapport between students and educators. The contact between these two stakeholders pertaining to schoolwork is central to the achievement of students. Some students come from underprivileged backgrounds with very limited parental support while others lack strategies to work independently and are not resilient.”

4.3.5.11 Parents should practise honesty and support their children

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that parents should practice honesty and support their children. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“The job of the parent is to protect and love their child. I would advise to them to quarantine learners who tested positive and let the school know about learners who are sick because they hide positive cases and results from the government got to school late about two to three weeks later. We need to help one another; every life counts, so with love we can protect all kids. Imagine knowing after a while that there was a positive case then there are new four others in one class. It was not good at all. The learners were never safe and we have learners who spread other diseases to them. This was even a greater scare” (Participant 12).

Therefore, Basotho high school parents should practice honesty and support their children during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may boost learner's confidence because of the support they know they have from both their teachers and parents. They will feel a sense of belonging at home and school. This supports Pitikoe *et al.* (2021: 69) that

“... due to the pandemic in the process, interrupting the rapport between students and educators. The contact between these two stakeholders pertaining to schoolwork is central to the achievement of students. Some students come from underprivileged backgrounds with very limited parental support while others lack strategies to work independently and are not resilient.”

4.3.5.12 Virtual teaching and learning should be implemented in rural high schools

The participants' responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that virtual teaching and learning should be implemented in rural high schools. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“It is high time online classes are introduced in rural schools. Basic education is every learner's right; online teaching will help in ensuring that every learner gets basic

education, and they are not left behind because of the area they live in or of any other pandemic” (Participant 13).

Therefore, virtual teaching and learning should be implemented in Basotho high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may expose both learners and teachers to virtual learning successes and challenges so that they come up with relevant strategies to overcome their virtual learning challenges.

4.3.5.13 SGBs should raise funds for vegetables plantation

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that School Governing Body (SGB) should raise funds for vegetables gardens. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“The advice that I can give to other rural high schools is that their SGB must fundraise and use the school yard to prepare vegetables. They can use the old exercise books by selling them to buy food for the learners” (Participant 14).

Therefore, Basotho high school SGB’s should raise funds for vegetables farming during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may help learners from poor family background to go to bed with full stomach. Also, the learners will fit in and be able to learn effectively in their classrooms.

4.3.5.14 Education stakeholders should work together to overcome challenges

The participants’ responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that all stakeholders in education should work together to overcome the challenges. This could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. One participant shared the following;

“My advice would be for SMT to work together with SGB, SBST, teachers, parents and learners. They should ensure that every challenge they face in teaching and learning is resolved together for the betterment of the learner’s future” (Participant 15).

Therefore, education stakeholders should work together to overcome challenges in Basotho high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may boost learners and learner’s confidence because of the support they know they have from education stakeholders. They will

automatically feel energized and as conquerors. This supports Cao *et al.* (2020: 4) statement that

“social support not only reduces the psychological pressure during the epidemics but also changes the attitude regarding social support and help-seeking methods. The mental health of college students is significantly affected when faced with public health emergencies, and they require attention, help, and support of society, families, and colleges. It is suggested that the government and schools should collaborate to resolve this problem to provide high-quality, timely crisis-oriented psychological services to college students.”

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, narrative analysis is a story that contains a sequence of events, meaning that narratives take place on time or in some time period. Narratives incorporate temporality, a social context, complicating events, and an evaluative conclusion that together makes a coherent story. In this discussion, the participants narrated the meaning of the COVID-19 pandemic and its influence on effective learning. Participants also evaluated the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, while coming up with possible solutions to tackle the problems brought by COVID-19 on effective learning. Participants narrated their stories based on psychosocial factors that they experienced during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, participants narrated psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning, based on the challenges they faced, and the strategies they had to adopt in order to overcome the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning among Basotho learners in a selected high school.

The next chapter presents the discussion, interpretation of the findings, recommendations based on the narrative data analysis covered in the previous chapter, as well as the study's limitations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, INTERPRETATION, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented and analyzed the findings generated using in-depth interviews. This chapter presented the discussion, interpretation of the findings, recommendations based on the narrative data analysis covered in the previous chapter, as well as the study limitations and conclusions. The aim and objectives of the study were to (i) determine the psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, (ii) explore the challenges in effective learning that Basotho learners in a rural high school face during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, (iii) explore the strategies that can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome these challenges in order to enhance effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore (i) psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors range from a panic behaviour or collective hysteria to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation which are associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behaviour. It has also triggered a wide variety of psychological problems, such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression. (ii) The study also explored the challenges that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. Such challenges include learning from home, group learning paused, youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, poor academic performance, inadequate face-to face education, loss of school connectedness, due to school closures, poor teacher and peer support and lack of intrinsic motivation. (iii) The study also explored the strategies that could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such strategies include extra classes attendance, identification of areas that needs improvement, policy adjustment and online learning.

This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings as related to the literature on (i) psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high

school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic,; (ii) challenges faced in effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, and (iii) the strategies that can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chapter also included a discussion on the connection of this study with Protection Motivation Theory and self-efficacy theory. The chapter concludes with recommendations based on the narrative data analysis done in the previous chapter, limitations, and conclusion. The chapter also contains discussions of the findings and future possibilities of research to assist in answering the research questions: (i) What psychosocial factors influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic? (ii) What challenges do Basotho learners in a rural high school face in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic? and (iii) What remedies or strategies can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic?

The study also discussed the relevance of the Protection Motivation Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory on (i) Psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such factors range from a panic behaviour or collective hysteria to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation which are associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behaviour. It has also triggered a wide variety of psychological problems, such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression. (ii) The study also discussed the relevance of the Protection Motivation Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory on challenges faced in effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such challenges include learning from home, group learning paused, youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, poor academic performance, inadequate face-to face education, loss of school connectedness, due to school closures, poor teacher and peer support and lack of intrinsic motivation. (iii) The study also discussed the relevance of the Protection Motivation Theory and Self-Efficacy Theory on the strategies that can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such strategies include attending extra classes, identification of areas that needs improvement, policy adjustment and online learning.

The discussion comprises of four themes: (a) psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, (b) challenges faced in effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, (c) strategies that could help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, (d) reflections of learners, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT given to other learners, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT that experience similar challenges in their rural high school. Rural Basotho high school learners experienced various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic and the school developed remedies and solutions to help them. All the challenges that were faced in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic forced learners and the school to find ways to continue learning, regardless of the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.3 Interpretation of the findings

Rural high school Basotho learners experienced various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the four themes were the critical processes that helped rural high school learners cope with various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. These four themes are described thoroughly in subsequent sections.

5.3.1 Research question 1: Psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

The research findings have revealed that rural high school learners experienced various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural high school teachers, parents and guardians have admitted that rural high school learners experienced various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among the Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants pointed out some psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research findings have revealed that depression was a major psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inherently supports Akat and Karataş (2020:2) that “young

people are thought to have psychological consequences such as loneliness, depression, anger, pessimism, and hopelessness.”

The research findings have revealed that hopelessness is a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemics. The notion supports Akat and Karataş (2020:2) claim that “young people are thought to have psychological consequences such as loneliness, depression, anger, pessimism, and hopelessness.”

The research findings have revealed that the inability to cope with school work was an influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic This aligns with Nurunnabi *et al.* (2020:5) who note that “coping strategies for COVID-19 cannot be short term. There may be a long-time frame since subsequent waves of COVID may arise.”

The research findings have revealed that lack of contact time with the teachers was a social factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Hebebcı, Bertiz, and Alan’s (2020:278) observation that “students who were not satisfied with distance education explained the reason for their dissatisfaction as a result of not understanding the subject, finding the teacher inadequate, inadequate time, and lack of infrastructure.”

The research findings have revealed that loneliness was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Akat and Karataş’ (2020: 2) view that “young people are thought to have psychological consequences such as loneliness, depression, anger, pessimism, and hopelessness.”

The research findings have revealed that that lack of intrinsic motivation was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inherently supports Flueggen’s (2020:12) observation that “the hardest part of working from home was finding the motivation to do schoolwork during the uncertainty of the state of world. Without the extrinsic drivers of school, routine, consequences, resources and easy access to teacher and peer support, many students reported being unable to find the intrinsic motivation to study.”

The research findings have revealed that panic was a psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. A wide variety of psychological problems, such as 'panic disorder, anxiety, and depression' was triggered" (Qiu, Shen, Zhao, Wang, Xie, and Xu, 2020). The research findings have revealed that anxiety was a psychological factor influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The notion supports Arslan, Yıldırım and Zangeneh's (2021:2) view that "anxiety related to the COVID-19 is one of the most commonly experienced distresses during pandemic."

The research findings have revealed that fear was a major psychological factor that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Jha's (2020:83) view that "common psychological reactions related to the mass quarantine which was imposed to attenuate the COVID-19 spread is generalized fear and pervasive community anxiety which are typically associated with disease outbreaks and increased with the escalation of new cases together with inadequate anxiety provoking information which was provided by media."

The research findings have revealed that family rejection and neglect was a social factor influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inherently supports Bozkurt *et al.*'s (2020: 45) view that this is because "firstly, many parents were working from home and so did not have the time to be available to assist with these online classes and secondly, the parents were not always *au fait* with the content of the work, particularly in a subject like mathematics."

The research findings have revealed that peer isolation was a social factor influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Olawale, Mutongoza, Adu and Omodan's (2021:189) observation that "COVID-19-induced psychosocial challenges have significant impact on interpersonal relationships. These challenges include isolation from peers, colleagues, as well as the university community, lack of emotional and psychosocial support, and the inability to balance work in the academic domain with private life."

These factors affected their learning progress to an extent that their academic performance dropped. In this research, Thabo Mofutsanyana District rural high school learners stated that they experienced various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during

COVID-19 pandemic. Although the education stakeholders came up with ways they would use to make learners continue learn, regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic, rural high school learners, parents or guardians, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT emphasized the effect of psychosocial factors that learners experienced on effective learning which resulted in poor academic performance.

5.3.2 Research question 2: Challenges faced by Basotho learners in a rural high school in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

Although all the participants emphasized psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during COVID-19 pandemic in Thabo Mofutsanyana District, the participants also revealed the challenges faced by Basotho learners in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several challenges were unearthed during in-depth interviews.

The research findings revealed that learning from home was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chandra (2020:230) notes that “the COVID-19 pandemic is accompanied with strictly following isolation measures that have led learners and educators to confine at their homes; a disturbing social life and learning at isolation has made it stressful for students and educators.”

The research findings have revealed that group learning was another challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pitikoe *et al.* (2021:68) postulate that “the closure meant that learners were to stay and study at home, much to the dismay of the learners who had grown intimate with the traditional classroom approach.”

The research findings have revealed that youth involvement in crimes was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Onyema *et al.*'s (2020:118) view that “if the students are not engaged productively, it could lead to idleness which might result in youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, and poor academic performance.”

The research findings have revealed that loss of interest in learning was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Onyema *et al.*'s (2020:118) view that “if the

students are not engaged productively, it could lead to idleness which might result in youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, and poor academic performance.”

The research findings have revealed that poor academic performance was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Onyema *et al.*'s (2020:118) view that “if the students are not engaged productively, it could lead to idleness which might result in youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, and poor academic performance.”

The research findings have revealed that the change of teaching techniques was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This aligns with Suryaman *et al.*'s (2020: 525) observation that

“although formally educational activities can still be done online, because students must study at home, character education during this pandemic has become a little neglected. Formerly, when learning activities were carried out in schools, character education was carried out under the direct supervision of the teacher or lecturer. Activities that support character education can also be carried out directly, intensively and the level of success can be measured.”

The research findings have revealed that inadequate face-to face education was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion is in alignment with Onyema *et al.*'s (2020:111) view that “coronavirus pandemic created multiple problems for the education sector leading to decreased education opportunities for underprivileged learners and those in rural areas.”

The research findings have revealed that loss of school connectedness due to school closures was another challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Drane, Vernon and O’Shea’s (2020:8-9) observation that “loss of school connectedness, due to school closures, may exacerbate the risk of educational disengagement, especially for vulnerable young people. This is compounded for those children in care, or those moving between households or locations, as often school is the only constant in their lives.”

The research findings have revealed that poor teacher and peer support was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inherently supports Pitikoe *et al.* (2021: 69) who argue that “... due to the pandemic in the process, interrupting the rapport between students and educators. The contact between these two stakeholders pertaining to schoolwork is central to the achievement of students. Some students come from underprivileged backgrounds with very limited parental support while others lack strategies to work independently and are not resilient.”

The research findings have revealed that high rate of school dropouts was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants decided to stop attending school because they were used to waking up late and doing nothing with their time. This became an addiction which resulted in them leaving school. This notion supports Buckler *et al.*'s (2020) observation that "the longer schools are closed, the more drop-out occur.”

The research findings have revealed that lack of intrinsic motivation was another challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inherently supports Flueggen's (2020:12) view that “the hardest part of working from home was finding the motivation to do schoolwork during the uncertainty of the state of world. Without the extrinsic drivers of school, routine, consequences, resources and easy access to teacher and peer support, many students reported being unable to find the intrinsic motivation to study.”

The research findings have revealed that knowledge gap was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Gustafsson and Deliwe's (2020:3) view that “the evidence suggests strongly that learning losses, at least as measured soon after the disruption, will be greater than what is suggested by actual days lost, in large part because disruptions result in learners forgetting some of what was previously learnt”.

The research findings have revealed that transitioning to virtual learning was a major challenge that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Spaul and van der Berg's

(2020: 50) view that “apart from the fact that parents and caregivers are not trained or equipped to teach their own children, the existing lockdown ‘plans’ for learning have not mitigated the losses in learning for children that do not have proper technology enabled learning at home”.

All this was the result of regulation that was implemented in South African schools as a way of curbing the spread of COVID-19. Fundamentally, the DoE wanted learning to continue as it is the basic right of every South African child even during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This sentiment in the research is standard with studies corresponding to DoE objective which was to ensure that learning continues regardless of COVID-19 pandemic. SMT, SBST, SGB, teachers and parents had to come up with strategies and remedies to help ensure effective learning happened during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic among rural high school learners. They first had to identify challenges that influence effective learning and then came up with possible remedies for them.

5.3.3 Research question 3: Strategies to help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic

Although all the participants emphasized psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic in Thabo Mofutsanyana District, participants also devised strategies that Basotho learners in a rural high school could use to enhance effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Several strategies were suggested during semi-structured interviews.

The research findings have revealed that finding a conducive learning environment that was free from depression and promoted concentration was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inherently supports Pitikoe *et al.* (2021:73) who state that “the last area for consideration is social presence whereby emphasis is on creating a community of learning where students interact with the learning content within a social group. The role of the teacher is to guide the discussion and make comments on the learners’ contributions.”

The research findings have revealed that online studies via (WhatsApp) was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inherently supports Hebebe, Bertiz, and

Alan's (2020:267) view that "due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, many countries around the world have had to interrupt educational activities or develop different alternatives in a very short time."

The research findings have revealed that investing time and seeking help was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. This notion supports Cao *et al.* (2020:4) view that "social support not only reduces the psychological pressure during the epidemics but also changes the attitude regarding social support and help seeking methods. The mental health of college students is significantly affected when faced with public health emergencies, and they require attention, help, and support of society, families, and colleges. It is suggested that the government and schools should collaborate to resolve this problem to provide high-quality, timely crisis-oriented psychological services to college students."

The research findings have revealed that that platooning of learners was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose behind this important and immediate move includes an "attempt to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 disruptions on the school calendar and also to safeguard learners' rights to education" (Pitikoe *et al.*, 2021:71).

The research findings have revealed that adjusting school-based policies to support learners was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The notion supports Bozkurt *et al.* (2020:47) that

"the Department of Basic Education has released a statement that all schooling will recommence at the end of May (only grades 7 and 12) with the other grades being absorbed in at varying times. The emphasis on the reopening policy is to ensure that the infrastructure is safe there are guidelines for installing water tanks, additional desks, hand sanitizers and masks and temperature detectors."

The research findings have revealed that supplying learners with stationery and masks was a strategy that helped Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The notion supports Bozkurt *et al.* (2020:47) that

“the Department of Basic Education has released a statement that all schooling will recommence at the end of May (only grades 7 and 12) with the other grades being absorbed in at varying times. The emphasis on the reopening policy is to ensure that the infrastructure is safe – there are guidelines for installing water tanks, additional desks, hand sanitizers and masks and temperature detectors.”

Challenges in effective learning that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic among Basotho learners needed immediate response from the learners, teachers, parents or guardians, SGB, SBST and SMT so that the challenges are resolved and effective learning can take place. This research's conclusion stresses the importance of strategies that a rural high school implemented for effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants revealed that the remedies and strategies that Basotho learners in a rural high school implemented to enhance effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, help restore hope in the lives of rural high school learners. However, the remedies and strategies that the rural high school came with need to be improved for future pandemics, especially online learning. Teachers and learners must be trained thoroughly, and the DBE must supply schools with relevant infrastructure.

5.4 Reflections

The research findings have revealed that Basotho learners in a rural high school in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District experienced various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants dealt with the challenges differently and came up with remedies and strategies that helped promote effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants devised strategies to ensure that effective learning continued to take place in a rural high school during the era of the COVID19 pandemic. Participants put more effort to ensure that all rural high school learners continued to learn, while implementing COVID-19 rules to ensure that the COVID-19 disease was managed and prevented from spreading.

Lephoto (2021:42-43) posits that “research shows that COVID-19 pandemic has impacted badly on school systems, particularly teaching and learning process and school life in general.’ Schools across the world had to suddenly close, necessitating unforeseen adoption of uncommon online teaching and learning as a plan to continue with teaching and learning”. Understandably, this circumstance had a possibility of not only harming learning, but it could also intensify the already existing reality of deteriorating emotional well-being amid school

going population. Accordingly, "this pandemic has revealed inequalities and vulnerabilities in education systems globally, by highlighting that it is likely that developed countries will recover quickly compared with less developed countries" (Tarricone, Mestan and Teo 2021:7). Moreover, Arslan (2020:7) postulates that "there is a crucial need to understand the protective and mitigating factors to develop effective prevention and intervention strategies for promoting people's mental health and well-being in the context of the coronavirus pandemic's experiences."

Furthermore, Nurunnabi *et al.* (2020:5) state that

"coping strategies for COVID-19 cannot be short term". Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic, "serves as a wakeup call for all those involved in education to strive towards collective meaning making of how schools can effectively strengthen and utilize available resources such as teachers' basic guidance and counselling skills to respond to the challenge of declining emotional well-being among learners" (Lephoto 2021: 46).

The research findings have revealed that participants had bits of advice to share with other learners, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT that experience similar challenges in their rural high school. The participants acknowledged that it is time online learning is implemented thoroughly so that when pandemics erupt again then effective learning would happen. In the face of continued uncertainty and strengthening the partnerships which were created during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic, school disruptions and leveraging the capacities within the communities will go a long way in ensuring increased flexibility and adaptability in our schools, so they are ready for future unanticipated changes or disruptions.

Participants emphasized that during the COVID-19 pandemic certain precautionary measures had to be put in place to ensure the corona-virus was not spread in the classes, including maintaining social distancing, wearing masks and sanitizing their hands every twenty minutes. The research findings are in line with van Bavel *et al.* (2019:30) who noted that PMT

"posits that, when facing a threatening event, people conduct two appraisal processes: one focused on the threat itself and the other on their ability to act against that threat (threat appraisal and coping appraisal, respectively). This affects their intention to take precautionary action and results in adaptive or maladaptive behaviors vis-à-vis the threat."

Further, Schwarzer (2016:1) postulates that "self-efficacy influences the effort one puts forth to change risk behaviour and the persistence to continue striving despite barriers and setbacks

that may undermine motivation.” Many participants believed that regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were remedies and strategies that could be implemented that ensured that challenges they experienced were dealt with.

5.5 Implications for theory and research

Chapter two included Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) and Self-Efficacy Theory. How Protection Motivation Theory (PMT) and Self-Efficacy Theory is recognized in this research is discussed below.

5.5.1 Protection Motivation Theory (PMT)

According to Rogers (1975:93), Protection Motivation Theory is “a fear appeal communication that initiates cognitive appraisal processes concerning (a) the noxiousness or severity of the threatened event, (b) the probability of the occurrence of the event, and (c) the efficacy of a recommended coping response.” Also, Clubb and Hinkle (2015:2) state that “PMT proposes that both individual and environmental factors can provide either encouragement or discouragement for engaging in protective behaviors and that the effects of such factors are mediated by individual cognitive processes.” In addition, Tsai *et al.* (2016:3) state that “PMT proposes that protective behaviour is motivated by threat and coping appraisals.”

In this research, participants believed that despite the threat posed to their health and education by the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a way they could cope with the pandemic while ensuring that learning takes place. Participants were willing to go extra mile in ensuring that effective learning takes place in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. They came up with remedies and strategies that helped rural high school learners to continue to learn, regardless of threat posed to their health by the COVID-19 pandemic. Precautionary measures were put in place as a way to ensure that COVID-19 was not passed from one person to another. Participants in this study were aware of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on their health and education, also what they could do to avoid contacting coronavirus while ensuring that effective learning takes place.

Therefore, the results of this research confirm that PMT is important in assisting learners, parents or guardians, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT cope with the influence of the COVID19 pandemic on effective learning, while ensuring that they were safe from coronavirus contact. Learners, parents or guardians, teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT members who were interviewed in this research, showed that protective behaviour was motivated by the COVID-19 threat and

coping appraisals. Participants were successful in coping with the COVID-19 pandemic and were able to curb the spread of COVID-19 among them, while managing the threat posed to their health and rural high school in effective learning.

5.5.2 Self-efficacy theory

Maddux (1987:54) states that

“people tend to engage in behaviors that they believe will get them what they want and they believe that they can do.” Also, Maddux, Norton and Stoltenberg (1986:783) note that “this theory also maintains that an expectancy held by a person concerning mastery or coping can be viewed as two related expectancies: an outcome expectancy, the belief that a given behaviour will or will not lead to a given outcome; and a self-efficacy expectancy, the belief that the person is or is not capable of performing the requisite behaviour.”

Moreover, Schwarzer (2016:1) posits that “self-efficacy influences the effort one puts forth to change risk behaviour and the persistence to continue striving despite barriers and setbacks that may undermine motivation.”

In this research, learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT believed that they were able to engage in behaviors that ensured that effective learning happened amidst the challenges posed to them by the COVID-19 pandemic. The strategies that were implemented helped participants cope with the COVID-19 pandemic challenges, while leading them to expected outcome which was to ensure that effective learning happens in a rural high school while the corona virus is managed. Participants were also eager to put in extra time to cover the curriculum and explain content thoroughly to the learners. Participants in this study were aware of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning and allowed their self-efficacy to influence the effort they put forth to change risk behaviour and the persistence to continue striving despite challenges, barriers and setbacks that undermined their motivation.

Therefore, the results of this research confirm that self-efficacy is significant to learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT as it helped them cope and put more effort in changing the COVID-19 pandemic risk on their health and effective learning, while they were persistent to continue winning regardless of challenges, barriers and setbacks that undermined their motivation. Learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT members

that were interviewed in this research showed people tend to engage in behaviors that they believe would get them what they want and they believe that they can do.

5.6 Recommendations and limitations for future research

5.6.1 Recommendations for future research

This study contributed to the in-depth understanding of psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic at a rural Basotho high school. As the study proceeded, some areas were identified for future research.

- a) This study was based on one rural Basotho high school that had teachers and learners that experienced several psychosocial factors during the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic era forced the DOE and DOH to come up with strategies to manage the spread of COVID-19, which was immediate school closure. As a result, challenges emerged that threatened effective learning. It is recommended that a similar study be conducted in various rural Basotho high schools on the challenges identified in this study to examine if those schools experienced the same challenges or different ones.
- b) The findings revealed that most psychological factors arose during the COVID-19 pandemic. These factors hindered effective learning in a rural Basotho high school. Rural Basotho high school teachers and learners experienced various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning such as panic, depression, loneliness, hopelessness, social isolation, teenage pregnancy, worry and substance abuse. Multiple research sites would produce more nuanced discussions and other psychological factors that influenced effective learning during COVID-19 at a single rural Basotho high school may emerge.
- c) In this study, only one in-depth interview session was held with each participant. As a result, the psychosocial factors, challenges and strategies that emerged may be limited. It is suggested that multiple sessions be held on the topic to generate a wholesome psychological factors, challenges and strategies employed during COVID-19 pandemic for effective learning.

5.6.2 Limitations

Dimitrios and Antigoni (2019:156) argue that

“limitations of any particular study concern potential weaknesses that are usually out of the researcher’s control, and are closely associated with the chosen research design, statistical model constraints, funding constraints, or other factors. In this respect, a limitation is an ‘imposed’ restriction which is therefore essentially out of the researcher’s control.”

However, it might affect the study design, findings and eventually, conclusions and should be recognized in the paper when submitted. Another area of possible limitation is data analysis methodology. Qualitative methodologies cannot be repeated (like in controlled experimental conditions) and they cannot be verified. In quantitative statistical analysis, models can certainly rule correlation between variables, however, not causation. Therefore, all the limitations should be stated so that findings are not twisted and misconceived by the wider readership. Moreover, Queirós, Faria and Almeida (2017:370) state that

“qualitative research is not concerned with numerical representatively, but with the deepening of understanding a given problem. In qualitative research, the researcher is both the subject and the object of his research. The objective of the qualitative methodology is to produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis.”

Therefore, qualitative research focuses on the understanding and explanation of the feat of social interactions.

Qualitative research was the most accurate option for this research; however, qualitative tools such as in-depth interviews are not created to generate concrete facts. If the study was linked with quantitative research, the study could have procured more credibility. For example, Likert scale was created for quantitative research and followed by statistical analysis to reinforce detected data using qualitative tools of research. Another quantitative study would assist in reinforcing the findings of this research and would be studied using a more prominent and different population, probably matching learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT response and solutions towards various psychosocial factors that influenced effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic and the school developed remedies and solutions to help them.

Also, a broader participant's demography of learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT could have offered more perception on various psychosocial factors that

influenced effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the school developed remedies and solutions to help them. Again, this research was short of participants' diversity from the perspective of race. Another angle to explore this title would be to look at the major role played by the DBST in providing support to the teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT and strategies DBST suggested to assist teachers, SGB, SBST and SMT cope with challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning.

5.7 Conclusion

The concept of effective learning is very important in teaching and learning. However, the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning made it impossible for rural Basotho high school learners in Thabo Mofutsanyana District to learn effectively. Rural high school Basotho learners experienced various psychosocial factors that challenged effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this research suggested that four themes have played vital part in rural high school learners' effective learning and assisted them to deal effectively with the challenges that were brought by COVID-19 pandemic on their education. Those themes are (i) psychological factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such factors range from a panic behaviour or collective hysteria to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation which are associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behaviour. It has also triggered a wide variety of psychological problems, such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression. (ii) The second theme entails challenges that Basotho learners in a rural high school face in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such challenges include learning from home, group learning paused, youth involvement in crimes, loss of interest in learning, poor academic performance, inadequate face-to face education, loss of school connectedness, due to school closures, poor teacher and peer support and lack of intrinsic motivation. (iii) The final theme entails the strategies that can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges in effective learning during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such strategies include attending extra classes, identification of areas that needs improvement, policy adjustment and online learning). These themes are in line with learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT attitude toward all the challenges they faced during COVID-19 pandemic for effective learning.

Participants in this research presented themselves as people who were determined to overcome any challenge that was posed to them by COVID-19 pandemic that threatened effective

learning. Participants went extra mile to make sure that effective learning took place by holding and attending extra classes, identifying areas that needs improvement, adjusting policy, and having online lessons so that learners could ask teachers questions where they did not understand. They even had a chance to have peer learning in group WhatsApp because learning was affected by precautionary measures that were put in place to curb the spread of COVID19 in schools. Learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT members in this study had self-efficacy which was useful in terms of resolving challenges that were brought by the COVID-19 pandemic on effective learning. Participants' strategies to help the learners showed that they value effective learning and learners' future. The results in this research suggest that learners, parents or guardians, educators, SGB, SBST and SMT members in Thabo Mofutsanyana District view the challenges they encountered during COVID-19 pandemic in the rural high school as motivation to put more effort in their school work and teaching careers and support the learners in any way they could.

The research conclusions stress that psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic (such as panic behaviour or collective hysteria to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation) were associated with negative outcomes, including suicidal behaviour. It has also triggered a wide variety of psychological problems, such as panic disorder, anxiety, and depression influenced effective learning. The participants' reactions to the challenges they faced in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District rural high school and their strategies and remedies to the challenges show that they value teaching and learning. The participants' strategies and efforts to solve the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic in the rural high school enabled teaching and learning.

Therefore, the research findings are in line with related literature on psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners in a rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic. Akat and Karataş (2020:1) state that pandemics are diseases that cause millions of people to die and have great negative effects on the psychological health of society. In addition, Jha (2020:83) notes that “common psychological reactions related to the mass quarantine which was imposed to attenuate the COVID-19 spread are generalized fear and pervasive community anxiety which are typically associated with disease outbreaks and increased with the escalation of new cases together with inadequate anxiety-provoking information which was provided by media.” The psychological reactions to COVID-19

pandemics may range from a panic behaviour or collective hysteria to pervasive feelings of hopelessness and desperation which are associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behaviour. Also, a wide variety of psychological problems, such as “panic disorder, anxiety, and depression” was triggered (Qiu, Shen, Zhao, Wang, Xie, and Xu, 2020). Likewise, Akat and Karataş (2020:2) argue that “young people are thought to have psychological consequences such as loneliness, depression, anger, pessimism, and hopelessness.”

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Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance Letter

GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

22-Apr-2022

Dear Ms Mantwa Mofokeng

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners during the COVID-19 pandemic in a rural high school.

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2021/1045/22

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.

Please note that the costs of any counselling must be carried by the researcher.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Dr Adri
du
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Appendix 2: Informed consent form

RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

DATE

February- December 2021

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners during the COVID-19 pandemic in a rural high school.

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):

Mofokeng MM

2013143470

0680934140/0676003640

FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

Faculty of Education

Education

STUDY LEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

Dr Mukuna KR

0810451473

WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

This study is aimed at every person involved in education in our country, from parents, teachers, SMT, SGB, SBST, education district, the Department of Education and the learners. The study will explore psychosocial factors that influence effective learning and lead to the poor academic performance of the learners. This study will explore the challenges and remedies or strategies that can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges for effective learning during the COVID-pandemic in order to improvise on teaching and learning to get quality results with a high pass rate. As an educator under a Full-Service School (FSS), these psychosocial factors add to the learning barriers that our learners already have and our stress level, as the results get poorer by the year. The department expecting the teachers to produce results regardless of these problems also adds a strain on the teachers. At the end of this study education, stakeholder(s) will have an idea of the challenges and remedies or strategies that can help

Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome these challenges for effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to curb poor performance results.

WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

I Mofokeng Mantwa Mirriam was born in 1995/02/26 in the Free State. I am a language educator at Lesaoana Intermediate School which is a rural school. The school is classified as a Full Service School where learners with various learning barriers are taught. Working in this school has woken an interest in me to find alternative ways where these learners receive effective learning regardless of their learning barriers which differs from one child to the other. COVID19 pandemic has also become one of the added learning barrier because it has brought a number of changes in their lives especially in their learning environment, mental heal and social relations. Moreover, COVID19 pandemic affects everyone differently even the education department and its mission and vision. For these reasons I enrolled for Master Degree, specialising in Psychology of Education where I am able to carry out a study and get narrative of the factors that affect effective learning and explore ways to curb those factors through coming with various possible solution to various challenges the education sector is exposed to.

HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has not received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS yet. A copy of the approval letter once received from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS can be obtained from the researcher.

Approval number: [Click here to enter text.](#)

WHY ARE YOU INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

You are chosen to participate in this study because you are part of teaching and learning which is affected by COVID-19 pandemic. I have obtained your details from the school that I am going to conduct a research in. The researcher will use purposive and convenience sampling in terms of participants selection. The study will comprise fifteen participants (N=15) who will be four Basotho learners (n=4), four teachers (n=4), a School Governing Body (SGB) member (n=1), a School-Based Support Team (SBST) member (n=1), four parents or guardians of Basotho learners (n=4) and one School Management Team (SMT) member (n=1) from a rural high school in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District, Free State.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

The participant's actual role in this study is to take part in the in-depth interview where they'll be answering questions based on their COVID-19 experience on teaching and learning. The study involves in-depth interviews. The interview will consist of questions which seeks to find participants biographic information and their experience of COVID-19 pandemic impact on effective teaching and learning as well as the strategies and remedies to promote effective teaching and learning in during the pandemic era. The minimum interview session will last for twenty minutes, however should the researcher gets interesting information the interview will take more than twenty minutes. Thus, that is the time the participant will take in an interview. There will not be any possible risks to the child. The study might be painful or scary to the child some people have lost their loved ones to COVID-19 or might be repeating grade because they have failed because they could not cope studying during the pandemic era. The child will be allowed to notify the teacher, SGB or even an SMT member if they are sick or in pain during the course of the study.

CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?

Participation in this study is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being in this study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Possible benefits for participants and/or society in taking part in the study is that during the interview possible strategies or remedies to overcome psychosocial factors and challenges of COVID19 on effective leaning might surface and that will lead to effective teaching and learning in rural high school. The subject's participation in the study will be kept confidential, but information about him/her will be given to the study supervisor.

WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED INCONVENIENCE OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There won't be any potential level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant. Also, there are no possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants in the study as long as COVID-19 protocols are strictly followed by both participants and the researcher.

WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

Confidentiality of participant's information will be maintained, e.g. participants name will not be recorded, anywhere and no one will be able to connect participants to the answers they give. Participants' answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym, and participants will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. The study supervisor will have access to the data (transcriber/external coder) and they will maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality agreement. Participant's

answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the transcriber, external coder, and members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify participants will be available only to people working on the study, unless participants give permission for other people to see the records. Participants' anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. Also, participants' privacy will be protected in any publication of the information as their names will not be disclosed. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Participant can refuse to take part even if their parents have agreed to their participation. Again, participant can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?

Hard copies of your answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet of the supervisor's office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. In due course participants' information will be destroyed through burning of hard copies or deletion of electronically stored information. There will not be any potential level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant. Also, there won't be any possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants.

WILL I RECEIVE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?

There will not be any payment or reward offered, financially to participant for taking part in this study. Any costs incurred by the participant should be covered by the participant as the interviews will be take place at their workplace which is school. There won't be any potential level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant. There won't be possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants.

HOW WILL THE PARTICIPANT BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Mofokeng MM on 0680934140/0676003640 or 2013143470@ufs4life.ac.za. The findings are accessible for 6 months. Please do not use home telephone numbers. Departmental and/or mobile phone numbers are acceptable. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mofokeng MM on 0680934140/0676003640 or 2013143470@ufs4life.ac.za. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact +27587185343, +27810451473 or MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za. There won't be any potential level of inconvenience and/or discomfort to the participant. Also, there won't possible or reasonably foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential participants.

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

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, the undersigned,

_____ (participant's full names to be included), (the "Participant")

confirm that I voluntarily agree to participate in the research study referred to as the

_____ (the "Study") in relation to

and which Study is being conducted by

MOFOKENG MM

(insert the name of the researcher), (the "Researcher").

I, the undersigned Participant, further confirm that -

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or

otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;

7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

I, the Participant, agree to the recording of the in-depth interviews.

Full Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Full Name(s) of Researcher(s): _____ MOFOKENG MANTWA MIRRIAM

Signature of Researcher: _____ MOFOKENG MM _____ Date:
21/07/2021 _____

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

Learners

Section A

Biographic Information Gender:

Age:

Grade level:

Culture:

Residential area:

Home Language:

SECTION B

Interview Questions

2. What psychosocial factors influence effective learning among Basotho learners at your rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Have you experienced any of these psychosocial factors that influence effective learning at your rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic? Tell me more about those psychosocial factors you have experienced.
4. What challenges do you face at your rural high school for effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic? Tell me more about those challenges you faced.
5. What remedies or strategies can help you at your rural high school to overcome these challenges for effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
6. What kind of advice would you give to other learners at rural high school(s) experiencing similar challenges?

Parents or guardians of Basotho learners and SGB

Section A

Biographic Information Gender:

Age:

Highest qualification:

Culture:

Residential area:

Home Language:

SECTION B

Interview Questions

2. What psychosocial factors influence effective learning among Basotho learners at your child's rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Have your child experienced any of these psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners at a rural high school during the COVID19 pandemic? Tell me more about those psychosocial factors that your child has experienced.
4. What challenges did your child experience at a rural high school for effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic? Tell me more about those challenges that your child faced.
5. What remedies or strategies can help your child at a rural high school overcome these challenges for effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
6. What kind of advice would you give to other rural high school parents or guardians experiencing similar challenges?

***Teachers, School Governing Body (SGB), School-Based Support Team (SBST) & School Management Team (SMT) member**

Section A

Biographic Information Gender:

Age:

Teaching grade level:

Teacher's experiences:

Highest qualification:

Culture:

Residential area:

Home Language:

SECTION B

Interview Questions

2. What psychosocial factors influence effective learning among Basotho learners at your rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. Have your learners experienced any of these psychosocial factors that influence effective learning among Basotho learners at your rural high school during the COVID-19 pandemic? Tell me more about psychosocial factors that your learners experienced.
4. What challenges do the learners at your rural high school face for effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic? Tell me more about those challenges.
5. What remedies or strategies can help Basotho learners at your rural high school overcome these challenges for effective learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?
6. What kind of advice would you give to other rural high school(s) experiencing similar challenges?

Appendix 4: Counselling Psychologist Letter

MA PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

MPHIKELELI A. KHUMALO
B.A., B.A (Hons Psychology), M.A. (Dissertation), HED, [UNIN],
M. Psych (Clinical Psychology) [RAU]

P.O. BOX 7891
BERGVILLE, 3350
Tel: 083 478 5499
Fax: 086 506 3203
khumalomal@fshealth.gov.za
nogimba@gmail.com

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
Practice Number: 086001 0250872 (BHF)
Registration Number: PS 0093467 (HPCSA)

I **Mphikeleli Amos Khumalo** (*Clinical Psychologist*) hereby confirm that I will be able to provide any psychological services as requested. All the services rendered will be guided by the ethical code of the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

Thank You

Appendix 5: Gatekeeper's Letter-Department of Education

Enquiries: MZ Thango
Ref: Research Permission: M.M. Mofokeng
Tel. 082 537 2654
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



159 LERIBE VILLAGE
WITSIESHOEK
9870

Dear Ms. M.M. Mofokeng

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: Psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners during the COVID-19 pandemic in a rural high school.

1. **List of schools involved:** Mhato Senior Secondary School.
2. **Target Population:** Four learners doing grade 8-12, four teachers, one SBST member, one SMT member and one SGB member at the selected school.
3. **Period of research:** From the second week of February 2022 until 30 September 2022. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
 - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
 - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
 - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
 - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 13/12/2021

RESEARCH APPLICATION BY M.M. MOFOKENG, PERMISSION LETTER 13 DECEMBER 2021, THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT
Strategic Planning, Research & Policy Directorate Private Bag 120565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Thuto House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

www.fsdoe.fs.gov.za

Enquiries: MZ Thango
Ref: Notification of research: M.M. Mofokeng
Tel: 082 537 2654
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



District Director
Thabo Mofutsanyana District

Dear Ms. Mabaso

NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that Ms. M.M. Mofokeng has been granted permission to conduct research in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

Topic: Psychosocial factors influencing effective learning among Basotho learners during the COVID-19 pandemic in a rural high school.

1. **List of schools involved:** Mofato Senior Secondary School.
2. **Target Population:** Four learners doing grade 8-12, four teachers, one SBST member, one SMT member and one SGB member at the selected school.
3. **Period of research:** From the second week of February 2022 until 30 September 2022. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. **Research benefits:** This study is aimed at every person involved in education in our country, from parents, teachers, SMT, SGB, SBST, education district, the Department of Education and the learners. The study will explore psychosocial factors that influence effective learning and lead to the poor academic performance of the learners. This study will explore the challenges and remedies or strategies that can help Basotho learners in a rural high school overcome their challenges for effective learning during the COVID-pandemic in order to improve on teaching and learning to get quality results with a high pass rate. As an educator under a Full-Service School (FSS), these psychosocial factors add to the learning barriers that our learners already have and our stress level, as the results get poorer by the year.
5. Strategic Planning, Policy and Research Directorate will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 13/12/2021

RESEARCH NOTIFICATION, M.M. MOFOKENG, 13 DECEMBER 2021, THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

Strategic Planning, Research & Policy Directorate Private Bag X2565, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Thabo House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

www.fse.gov.za

Appendix 6: CTR-Feedback



Postgraduate Office Room 18
Faculty of Education Winkie Direko Building
Faculty of Education University of the Free State
P.O. Box 339
Bloemfontein 9300
South Africa
T: +27(0)51 401 3651
www.ufs.ac.za
Duvenhagecs@ufs.ac.za

28 June 2021

APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

Applicant: Mofokeng, MM
Student Number: 2013143470
Discipline: Psychology of Education
Study Code: Masters (EDPY8900)


Dear Ms Mofokeng

Your registered title is: **“PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE LEARNING AMONG BASOTHO LEARNERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN A RURAL HIGH SCHOOL”**

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,


Prof Patrick Mafora
Chair: CTR committee


Ms CS Duvenhage
Secretary: CTR committee

Appendix 7: Supervisor-Psychologist Letter



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: On-call counseling session request letter from Supervisor

Dear Khumalo,

This letter is to certify that Mrs Mantwa Mirriam Mofokeng (Student Number: 2013143470) is my Masters' student in Psychology of Education at the University of the Free State, QwaQwa Campus, and I am the Supervisor. I am aware that she is applying for ethical clearance and permission to conduct her research. However, the General Human Ethical Clearance requires approval from a counselor, which will help with counseling sessions of her participants via calls for free of charge if participants should experience any emotional distress. Therefore, I humbly request your help.

Your help will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Dr. Mukuna KR
Tel: 058 718 5343
MukunaKR@ufs.ac.za

