

**MITIGATING SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS THROUGH
SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS: CASE STUDY**

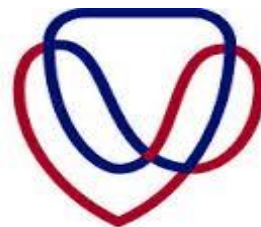
by

'MAPULANE CECILIA MAKATSE

(BA ED HON, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA, 2015)

Dissertation in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF PSYCHOLOGY IN EDUCATION



UFS · UV

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

Faculty of Education

University of the Free State

Bloemfontein

Supervisor: Dr Fumane Portia Khanare

JULY 2021

DECLARATION

I, 'Mapulane Cecilia Makatse, declare that the thesis, MITIGATING SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS THROUGH SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS: CASE STUDY, submitted for the qualification of MASTER OF PSYCHOLOGY IN EDUCATION at the University of the Free State is my own independent work.

All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family especially my beloved mother; Lucy who have built me a foundation of education that got me where I am today, my husband; Ephraim and sons; Felix and Denis whose love, support, encouragement and presence in my life have motivated me in progression of this dissertation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special acknowledgement goes to the Lord Almighty who granted me with life, strength and an opportunity to do this dissertation. It is also with heartfelt gratitude that I am giving thanks to my family; my mother for her kind support during my study, she became the best baby sitter for my children during my absence. Lucy, you are the best mother ever. Big thank you also to my sister; Tseyed, for she comforted me when situations became unpleasant. I am also grateful for the support, words of encouragement and patience of my husband; Mr M.E. Sehlabo who became the pillar of my strength during my sleepless nights and he cared for our lovely boys as I carried out this research.

Thanks also to my friends; Justinah Palime and Annacletta Ramatea who encouraged me in doing this study and for all the support they have shown me. It would not be possible without their support.

Special thanks must also go to my research participants (Deaf learners) for generously giving of their time to participate in the study. My sincere thanks must also go to my supervisor Dr F.P. Khanare for her guidance and feedback through each stage of the research process. I am really honoured that I made it through her support and nurturing.

ABSTRACT

School dropout phenomenon is a world-wide problem affecting all students including Deaf learners and other learners with special educational needs. Regardless of all the attempts made, school dropout among Deaf learners (hereafter - DL), still remain a challenge within our schools, as compared to their hearing counterparts. Therefore this study explored how school support networks could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in a selected high school in Leribe District in Lesotho through school support networks perceived to be available within and outside the school. Based on positive psychology, a strength-based theory was used to guide the study. The study followed the qualitative approach and adopted the transformative paradigm, also utilising a participatory research design. Focus group discussions and collages were the methods employed by the researcher to generate data from nine Deaf learners who were purposefully selected through the help of an interpreter. Thematic analysis was adopted.

The findings are that the Deaf learners possessed a diverse understanding of school support networks and viewed them as both human and non-human support networks, found within and outside the school environment. Furthermore, the findings showed diverse ways employed by the identified school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners, being provision of academic support, proffering emotional and psychosocial support, as well as providing social support that shaped their learning and enabled them to interact with others and have a sense of belonging. The result also identified resources used by Deaf learners, such as computer and resource rooms, library and playgrounds, etc., which supported them to achieve their academic goals. The study concluded that Deaf learners' academic success is everyone's responsibility and through school support networks all stakeholders can collaborate and enhance opportunities for all Deaf learners to become compatible community members.

Key words: mitigating; dropout; Deaf learners; school support networks; collage; focus group.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	x
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS	xi
CHAPTER 1 THE ORIENTATION TO AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	12
1.1. INTRODUCTION	12
1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	12
1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT	14
1.4. THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY	15
1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	15
1.5.1. Main question	15
1.5.2. Subsidiary questions	15
1.6. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES	16
1.6.1. Research aim	16
1.6.2. Research objectives	16
1.7. THE VALUE OF THE STUDY	16
1.8. CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS	17
1.9. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	19
1.9.1. Research paradigm	19
1.9.2. Research approach	19
1.9.3. Research design	20
1.9.4. Study area	20
1.9.5. Sample procedure	20
1.9.6. Sample and sample size	20
1.9.7. Data generation methods	21
1.9.8. Data analysis	21
1.9.9. Validity and trustworthiness of the study	21
1.9.10. Ethical consideration	22

1.10.	THE DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	22
1.11.	OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	23
1.12.	CHAPTER SUMMARY	24
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW		25
2.1	INTRODUCTION	25
2.2	THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF DEAFNESS	25
2.3	WHO IS A DEAF LEARNER?	26
2.4	DEFINING SCHOOL DROPOUT	27
2.4.1	Causes of school dropout.....	27
2.4.2	Causes of Deaf learners' school dropout	28
2.5	UNDERSTANDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT	41
2.5.1	Short-term effects of school dropout	42
2.5.2	Long-term effects of school dropout.....	43
2.6	THE CONSTRUCTIONS OFSCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS IN MITIGATING DEAF LEARNERS' SCHOOL DROPOUT.....	43
2.6.1	Peers/learners	44
2.6.2	Teachers	44
2.6.3	Interpreters	45
2.6.4	School management committee/administration	47
2.6.5	Parents	48
2.6.6	Community	48
2.6.7	Schools and institutions of higher education	50
2.6.8	Policy-makers.....	51
2.6.9	Government and Non-governmental Organizations (thereafter, NGOs)	51
2.7	FACTORS INHIBITING THE USE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS IN MITIGATING DEAF LEARNERS' SCHOOL DROPOUT	53
2.7.1	Lack of adequate teachers' training and professional development	53
2.7.2	Policies and curriculum issues	54
2.7.3	Little or lack of parental involvement	56
2.7.4	Language deficiency	56
2.7.5	Grade and age of the learner	58
2.8	DIVERSE STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE SCHOOL DROPOUT BY THE SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS.....	59
2.8.1	Learner-learner approach.....	59

2.8.2	Parental involvement.....	59
2.8.3	Teacher and interpreter professional development.....	60
2.8.4	Community involvement.....	60
2.8.5	Policy-makers.....	61
2.9	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	61
CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....		63
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	63
3.2	THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY.....	63
3.2.1	Origin of strength-based theory.....	64
3.2.2	Development of the individual in the strength-based theory.....	65
3.2.3	Elements of the strength-based approach.....	66
3.3	VARIOUS STUDIES TO WHICH THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY HAS BEEN APPLIED.....	70
3.4	APPLICATION OF THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY IN THE STUDY.....	72
3.5	MERITS OF THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY.....	74
3.6	DEMERITS OF THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY.....	75
3.7	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	76
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....		77
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	77
4.2	RESEARCH DESIGN.....	77
4.2.1	Research paradigm.....	78
4.2.2	Qualitative research approach.....	79
4.2.3	Case study.....	79
4.2.4	Study area.....	80
4.2.5	Research sampling.....	81
4.2.6	Selection of participants.....	82
4.3	DATA GENERATING METHODS.....	83
4.3.1	Focus group discussions (FGDs).....	83
4.3.2	Collages.....	85
4.3.3	Triangulation.....	86
4.4	VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY.....	87
4.5	DATA ANALYSIS.....	87
4.6	ETHICAL CONSIDERATION.....	88
4.7	CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	89

CHAPTER 5 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS	90
5.1 INTRODUCTION	90
5.2 PRESENTATION OF MAJOR THEMES	90
5.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS.....	92
5.3.1 Theme One: Deaf learners' comprehension of school support networks.....	92
5.3.2 Theme Two: The available school support networks to mitigate school dropout among deaf learners	97
5.3.3 Theme Three: Diverse ways employed by the school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners	107
5.3.4 Theme Four: multifaceted factors that inhibit school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners	114
5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY	124
CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	126
6.1 INTRODUCTION	126
6.2 SUMMARY OF THE KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS.....	126
6.2.1 Theme One: Deaf learners' comprehension of school support networks.....	127
6.2.2 Theme Two: School support networks available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.....	127
6.2.3 Theme Three: Diverse strategies employed by the school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners	128
6.2.4 Theme Four: Multifaceted factors that inhibit school support networks to mitigate school dropout among deaf learners.....	130
6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS	130
6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	133
6.5 THE LIMITATION OF THE STUDY	134
6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	134
REFERENCES	136
APPENDICES.....	163
APPENDIX A: ETHICS STATEMENT.....	163
APPENDIX B: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH.....	164
APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM MOET	166
APPENDIX D: CONSENT LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL.....	167
APPENDIX E: CONSENT LETTER TO THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	169
APPENDIX F: CONSENT LETTER TO THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER	171

APPENDIX G: INFORMED ASSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS	173
APPENDIX H: TRINSCRIBED ASSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS IN SIGN LANGUAGE	175
APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TOOL	177
APPENDIX J: COLLAGE CONSTRUCTION TOOL	180
APPENDIX K: LANGUAGE EDITING	182
APPENDIX L: TURN IT IN RECEIPT AND REPORT	183

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1: The strengths-based approach (adapted from Zacarian et al., 2017)..... 70

Figure 5.1: An outline of the themes and sub-themes identified in the study 91

Figure 5.2: Deaf learners’ understanding of school support networks 92

Figure 5.3: Resource charts of Deaf learners derived from FGDs..... 98

Figure 5.4: The collage depicting the human and non-human resources to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners 101

Figure 5.5: The diverse ways employed by the identified school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners 108

Figure 5.6: Multifaceted factors that inhibit school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners 115

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act
LCE	Lesotho Collage of Education
LIEP	Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LUCT	Limkomkwing University of Technology
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training
NAD	National Association of the Deaf
NMDS	National Manpower Development Secretariat
NUL	National University of Lesotho
SENs	Special Educational Needs
SL	Sign Language
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SSN	School Support Networks
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

THE ORIENTATION TO AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

School dropout is a serious academic problem globally, as it affects both developed and developing countries, including Lesotho. It cripples the development as it manipulates the human creativity and potentiality and inhibits all what is provided by schooling, such as broader opportunities for the development of critical thinking and social competencies (Lavrentsova & Valkov, 2019). The dropout situation is concerning because its negatively impact affects all – the individuals, families, communities, countries, continents and the universe at large, while education is considered as a means of poverty alleviation and economic development. For that matter, the present study was meant to explore how school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho can be mitigated through the use of school support networks.

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

School dropout rates are increasing at an alarming rate globally and there are existing records like one from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) showing that about 31.2 million pupils leave school before completing primary or lower secondary education and may or never come back. Hence, there is an appeal to address this problem (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (thereafter UNESCO, 2012)). The dropout phenomenon is a world-wide problem, associated with the problem of development in any society, whether such society is in a developing or developed country. This prevailing issue of school dropout affects all students, including Deaf learners and other learners with disabilities.

For African-American students, the dropout rate shows a tragic cycle that continues to increase, due to increasing human, economic and social cost and high crime (AABRI, 2015). In the context of Lesotho, some contextual factors, such as teachers' attitudes

towards learners with disabilities, teachers' lack of training towards inclusive teaching, and an uncoordinated school-community partnership (Mahlo, 2017), which hinder academic performance of Deaf learners, leave many learners not attending school or dropping out of school. It is a fact that, despite government efforts to respond to global policies and conventions, there are still glaring obstacles that keep children out of school.

According to Namakau (2019), many studies are done on school dropout, although it is based on the general population. Only a few are related to student with disabilities, mainly because some countries do not have reports showing dropout rates for students with disabilities. Similarly, among the few studies conducted on student with disabilities, are those with hearing impairments in Lesotho who, in many cases, leave school without completing their studies.

Research shows that education contributes to the holistic being and each one should be pro-active, using the opportunities available in life (Ministry of Education and Training thereafter, (MoET) (2015). The Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (thereafter - LIEP) (2018) recommends the creation of school support networks to ensure that children, including Deaf learners, have a right to learn and be nurtured to fulfil their potentials holistically. Based on the Child Protection and Welfare Act of 2011, enshrined in the Constitution of Lesotho, expressly affirms the right to education of children with disabilities to education including Deaf learners (Mkandawire, Maphale & Tseeke, 2016).

To mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners effectively, school support networks are fundamental (Greany & Higham, 2018). School Support Networks (hereafter, SSN), are defined as one of the best support systems, where certain professionals in line with their work, provide emotional and practical help to people facing difficulties (Polakow, 2012). On their account, Greany and Higham (2018), define SSN as a concept of the self-improving system where schools should galvanize policy-makers to urgent action in the schooling system. Hence, MoET (2015) considers teachers, learners and community members as crucial role players in creating networks in individual school context. However, the understanding and utilisation of SSN are still limited, especially in

Lesotho and Deaf learners continue to dropout from schools. Therefore, the current study aimed to understand how school support network is understood in a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho. It also intended to understand how SSN could be used to mitigate the dropout of Deaf learners in this selected school. It is hoped that SSN will provide opportunities for our schools and communities, as well as policy-makers to meet the needs of students, as its benefits, among others, are improved curriculum provision for students, pooled resources and support (Victoria State Government, 2018).

1.3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The education system in Lesotho has undergone drastic changes in order to support the Sustainable Development Goals (thereafter - SDGs) and Lesotho government aims to improve the access and success of all learners, despite their various disabilities (MoET, 2015). The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereafter - CRPD) (2018) supports this, stating that governments should ensure inclusiveness in their education systems and provision of free and compulsory primary and secondary education to all.

Consequently, some Deaf learners attend mainstream schools or classrooms. The inclusion of Deaf learners in mainstream schools has shown some demerits, as most teachers still find it difficult to teach Deaf learners. Furthermore, because it is often difficult to hear the voices of Deaf learners, their experiences in mainstream schools and improving schools for their betterment are limited, especially in the context of Lesotho.

It is therefore against this background that the present study sought to understand the phenomenon, SSN and its benefits to mitigate the dropout of Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District of Lesotho.

1.4. THE RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Working with Deaf learners daily, for almost eight years as their interpreter in an inclusive school, where they are taught together with their hearing counterparts as to attain quality education, it is through the researcher's observation and experience that Deaf learners are enrolled in large numbers at lower grades, but with time, their number at higher grades deteriorate and only few sit for the final examination, pass and go to higher education institutions. The main reason behind all of these is school dropout, which affects both Deaf boys and girls, due to various factors.

The study was therefore intended to explore the challenges faced by Deaf learners at school, how these challenges lead to their dropout and how SSN could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho. Hence, focus-group discussions and collages were conducted with Deaf learners as the main participants in this study. The review of the existing literature was done as to investigate factors associated with school dropout and its consequences, hoping to create awareness to all stakeholders in the education system about challenges faced by Deaf learners at school, how they lead to school dropout and how they could be rectified through the use of SSN.

1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5.1. Main question

How can SSN be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho?

1.5.2. Subsidiary questions

- i. What is the understanding of SSN by Deaf learners?
- ii. Which SSN are perceived to be available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho?

- iii. How could the identified SSN be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners?
- iv. What factors could inhibit the use of SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho?

1.6. RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.6.1. Research aim

The aim of this study is to explore how SSN could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho.

1.6.2. Research objectives

- i. To explore an understanding of SSN by Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho.
- ii. To determine SSN available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho.
- iii. To explore how the identified SSN could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho.
- iv. To explore factors that could inhibit the use of SSN towards mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho.

1.7. THE VALUE OF THE STUDY

The value of this study was to raise awareness amongst the stakeholders in Deaf education in Lesotho about challenges faced by Deaf learners. Another value was to provide a clear understanding of the SSN perceived to be available and how they can be beneficial in mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho to improve their academic ability.

The outcome of this research will hopefully reflect its quality and trustworthiness in assisting with the challenges Deaf and hearing learners face at school, which will be rectified through SSN. They will contribute towards decision making, as they will be given an opportunity to give their views in matters arising. Teachers of these learners will therefore demonstrate their multilevel competency to improve the standard of teaching, in order to attain national education goals (Ghofar, Abubakar & Azhar, 2018). They will have to teach in a Deaf-friendly way to create thriving people and a flexible environment for everyone to develop their talents and contribute positively towards any activity. Parents will enhance the positive collaboration with opportunities for all stakeholders to improve Deaf learners' academic performance. The quality of education programmes will improve too, with parents being fully engaged in their children's education, acknowledging what they do well and encouraging them to use and develop their strengths. The community becoming involved as well will help Deaf learners to become compatible community members.

Policy-makers in the MoET will have access to the findings and recommendations of the present study, which will be considered in policies and their reforms by including the diverse voices, including those of Deaf learners. Institutions of Higher Learning could benefit intensively by teaching educators or teachers to recognise SSN as a good approach towards mitigating challenges at schools and in daily life.

1.8. CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Dropout:

According to Webster (2020), dropout is one who ceases to attend school, college, etc., before completing. Mahoney (2018) argues that school dropout refers to anyone who fails to obtain a high school certificate. Wahba (2013) states that dropout is a person who discontinues a programme of education or training. As a result, in this study a Deaf learner is regarded as a dropout whenever he leaves school without obtaining a high school certificate.

Dropping out:

Webster (2020) states that dropping out is to take a leave in participation or membership, i.e. quit especially to exit from conventional society. Weybright, Caldwell, Xie, Wegner, and Smith (2017) argue that dropping out is departing school before completion of a grade before ending school term. Therefore in this study we find Deaf learners leaving school and never coming back for completion of their studies to end the school term.

Mitigate:

Mitigate means to make something less grievous (Webster, 2020). Therefore the term mitigate as a key concept in this study was found appropriate as the aim of the study is to reduce the rate in which Deaf learners are dropping out from school, bearing in mind that this process or action cannot be achieved in the blink of an eye but will take time till the problem may be fully rectified.

Deaf learners:

Landsberg, Kruger and Swart (2011) define Deaf learners as individuals bearing limited hearing ability and who, in most cases, communicate using Sign Language and finger-spelling to communicate, due to their deafness. In this study the participants are Deaf learners who communicate using Sign Language which can be regarded as their mother tongue due to their hearing loss or deafness.

School support networks:

School support networks are defined as a concept of the self-improving systems where schools should galvanize policy-makers to urgent action in the schooling system (Greany & Higham, 2018). According to Polakow (2012), school support networks are one of the best support systems, where some professionals, in particular –provide emotional and practical help to one in vulnerable predicament. Although the definitions of school support networks quoted above seem to indicate SSN as a professional service, it is very important to highlight that non-professional support system is also needed and it is provided to Deaf learners. Therefore in this study all stakeholders (both professionals and non-professionals) are requested to become the support system in

the development of Deaf learners mainly by supporting them to acquire education for them to thrive and become compatible community members.

Case study:

Case study is survey made on an individual, a particular group of people, an event or community (McLeod, 2019). The research by Baskarada (2014) asserts that it involves “intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units ... observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time” and is particularly beneficial for voluminous descriptions of complicated social phenomena. For the purpose of this study, observation is on Deaf learners being a particular group of people facing dropout phenomena which should be studied intensively as to find means to rescue them.

1.9. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

1.9.1. Research paradigm

The study was guided by transformative paradigm, as the aim of the study was to see to it that challenges faced by Deaf learners at school, leading to their dropout, are rectified and school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho should be mitigated using SSN by focusing on their potentials and being seen as able to define their own issues and seeking solutions on their own.

1.9.2. Research approach

The qualitative approach is used in this study to collect multiple meanings and gain detailed data from the participants, who will give their views on the challenges faced by Deaf learners in Lesotho schools, how these challenges lead to school dropout and how they can be rectified through exploration of SSN.

1.9.3. Research design

The study was based on participatory research design as to involve full participation of the participants, who hear and learn from one another and finally view how available SSN can be used for their betterment. The design also enabled the researcher to undertake multi-perspective analysis, in which not only the voices and perspectives of educators, but also the views of other stakeholders – mainly Deaf learners in this case – were heard and considered.

1.9.4. Study area

The area of study was a high school in the Leribe District of Lesotho, which is the only high school, currently accommodating Deaf learners from all ten districts of Lesotho and being taught with their hearing counterparts.

1.9.5. Sample procedure

Participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling to allow a researcher to gain rich information as the participants are known to be rich in knowledge of the information that was needed by the study.

1.9.6. Sample and sample size

The sample consisted of nine Deaf learners, being boys and girls aged 18 and above, coming from four categories of deafness. They become appropriate participants because they are facing challenges in school, which led to their drop out. This small sample allowed easy participation and interaction of the participants and the researcher.

1.9.7. Data generation methods

Data were generated through two methods: firstly Focus Group Discussions (thereafter; FGDs) were done and the participants were able to share ideas of what challenges Deaf learners face at school and how these challenges lead to school dropout among Deaf learners. It was during FGDs where the participants also stated what they perceived to be ways that could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho. The second method was collage, where the participants collaboratively through drawings, picture and notes, indicated ways they think would be used or taken to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners through SSN.

1.9.8. Data analysis

Data generated were analysed using a thematic method where the researcher had to immerse herself in it, in order to make good decisions on the findings through coding. This occurred in three steps, namely studying the data, categorising it and using memos (Sturkey, 2015).

1.9.9. Validity and trustworthiness of the study

Pre-testing of the data generation methods, focus-group discussions and collage were done prior to the actual sessions of data generation, as to predetermine challenges that might occur during the actual data generation process as to maintain validity, trustworthiness and credibility of the study. The drawings, pictures and notes from constructed collages by the participants were inspected to find how SSN could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho schools. Triangulation of the two data generation methods was done to verify the data obtained during both sessions.

1.9.10. Ethical consideration

The permission to proceed with the study was asked at the University of Free State in Faculty of Education Ethics Review Committee. Researcher also applied for permission of data generation at the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho through the District Senior Education Officer of Leribe, the principal and Head of Department (HOD) of the selected high school. The participants and the Sign Language interpreter were given consent forms that were to be signed as proof and agreement of voluntary participation of which they were made aware and assured of, before generating data. The transcribed materials, video and field notes were locked away for safety and will be destroyed after five years to ensure that confidentiality is not compromised.

1.10. THE DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was situated in educational psychology, which focuses on the holistic development of the child. For that matter the researcher explored how Deaf learners could be developed by accessing quality basic education through implementation of SSN, which are hoped to be beneficial towards mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho. This will benefit and enable all stakeholders in the education system, mainly in Deaf education to collaborate as to identify and rectify challenges faced by Deaf learners at school and help them to perform well at school, complete their studies and become compatible community members.

1.11. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study comprises of six chapters, which are presented in the following manner.

Chapter one provides an introduction, followed by background and problem statement. Aim and objectives, as well as research questions were stated. The review of the concepts from the title was included. The research design and methodology were discussed through clarification of the selected approach, paradigm, design, study area, sampling procedure, sample type and size, data generation methods, data analysis, and trustworthiness and ethical consideration. Furthermore, the delimitation of the study was given, together with the overview of the study and conclusion.

Chapter two focuses on the literature addressing challenges faced by Deaf learners at school, which led to school dropout. Concept of deafness and its categories were discussed. Dropout as the phenomenon was defined and factors associated with it stated, as well as its consequences. Lastly, the value of SSN as the proposed criteria for improving Deaf learners' academic performance was discussed.

Chapter three outlines information about theoretical framework of which the study is informed by, namely strength-based theory for an understanding of the strength perspective and collaboration, and their implication in mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho.

Chapter four elaborates on the methodological procedure of the study. It focused on the research paradigm, the approach, sampling, data generation, and data analysis, suitable for the study. Moreover, clarification of ethical consideration measures and delimitation of the study were given.

Chapter five provides the analysis of generated data through two methods, namely focus group discussions and collage. Thematic analysis was done through coding as to present and discuss the findings of the research, highlighting themes in relation to the research questions.

Chapter six, being the last chapter, presents the summary by showing the significance of the study, concluding recommendations for further research and implementation of

SSN in mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District, Lesotho.

1.12. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provides background of the study. Problem statement, aim and objectives, as well as research questions were clarified. Furthermore, value of this study towards various stakeholders involved in the educational system in Lesotho, was given. The key concepts in the study were defined. Finally, the layout of chapters was given. Next chapter presents literature used in this study, being the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides selected scholarly literatures based on their relevance to the present study. Concept of deafness and who is a Deaf learner were examined as well as the concept of school dropout. Causes of Deaf learners' school dropout were also discussed. Furthermore, literatures on the consequences of school dropout were discussed followed by the short-term and long-term effects of school dropout on Deaf learners. Factors inhibiting the use of SSN to mitigating deaf learners' school dropout and the various ways or strategies to mitigate school drop out by the school support networks were explored too. Finally, the chapter concluded with a brief summary.

2.2 THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF DEAFNESS

The concept 'deafness' can be regarded as a disability whereby an individual cannot hear with one or both ears just like a normal hearing person (Gudyanga, Wadesango, Eliphanos & Gudyanga, 2014). Globally, deafness differs by being mild, moderate, severe, or profound (World Health Organization (thereafter - WHO, 2018). The Canadian Association of the Deaf – Association des Sourds du Canada (thereafter, CAD-ASC; 2015), in their report also defines deafness as loss of functional hearing causing one to depend on visual communication. They further state that deafness can be referred to a situation where a person is depending on visual communication, he being deaf or hard of hearing (CAD-ASC, 2015). Biggers (2018) also notes that deafness can be described as the total or partial inability to hear sounds, resulting in failure to comprehend speech, even in a situation where amplifiers are utilised. This is concurred by the Special Education Guide (2013), which indicates that severe deafness can impede a deaf child in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without modification.

From South African context, Landsberg et al. (2011) define deafness as hear problem where an individual can be assisted by provision of hearing aids, speech therapy and signing skills. However, Gudyanga et al. (2014) pose that deafness is often wrongly associated with vulnerability, thus, the greatest obstacle facing Deaf learners is not the hearing disability, but the failure of parents, professionals and communities to understand and accept deaf culture.

Meanwhile, Gudyanga et al. (2014) and Zugaib (2016) assert that it is possible for Deaf learners to experience difficulty of hearing in either one or both ears. Therefore, it is imperative to note that visual means of communication is employed while communicating with Deaf learners and this includes the use of Sign Language, lip-reading, finger-spelling, facial expressions, body movements and writing. Hence, this communication mode is different from auditory communication: voice, hearing and the use of hearing aids and devices.

Moreover, for context of this study, the word 'deafness' will be appropriate term used to describe learners who experience difficulties in hearing. Deafness is derived from the medical model, which defines disabilities in terms of deviances, like an illness which can be fixed or cured (Flaherty, 2015).

2.3 WHO IS A DEAF LEARNER?

The present study focused on one of the problems of Deaf learners at schools, who is a school dropout. It is in the best interest of the study to comprehend well who Deaf learners are. Landsberg et al. (2011) also posit that Deaf learners are individuals with limited hearing ability and are using Sign Language to communicate. They further indicates that Deaf learners are categorized into four: congenital deafness (born deaf), pre-lingual deafness (become deaf before language development), post-lingual deafness (become deaf after language has developed) and Hard-of-hearing (the hearing is diminishing slightly) (Landsberg et al., 2011). Deaf learners are individuals who have different degree of hearing loss (Naidoo, 2008). She further indicates that this term is used when referring to those in need of special aids. Watson (2019) asserts that

a Deaf learner is a student or child who has challenges in language and speech development, due to declining auditory response to sound.

2.4 DEFINING SCHOOL DROPOUT

Globally, the word school 'dropout' does not have a homogeneous definition. In addition there have also been diverse views on what school dropout means. In other words, different scholars have explained and defined school dropout in different forms. Meanwhile, school dropout is seen as great predicament that has reached global crises. For instance, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute for Statistics, defines school dropout as when a number of pupils from a cohort enrolled in academic year are not longer enrolled in the following year. It is also defined as a short or long term withdrawal from an education or training program before its completion (EU Commission AL, 2010). According to Réseau réussite Montreal (2020), dropping out of school refers to leaving school before getting a certificate at any level. In South African context, the Department of Education defines dropout as leaving school before completing a given grade in a given academic year (Weybright et al., 2017). Mahlomaholo (2012) also notes that school dropout is referred to leaving school before completing at least the final secondary school grade. In a similar vein, Hartnack (2017) also describes school dropout as leaving education without obtaining minimal credentials.

2.4.1 Causes of school dropout

School dropouts are known to experience bad effects namely unemployment, poverty, bleak health prospects, unintended pregnancy, violence and crime as compared with their graduated schoolmates (De Witte, Cabus, Thyssen, Groot & Van den Brink, 2013). In Rwanda, Safari (2016) maintains that changes in family structure, along with events such as divorce, death, illness, and family migration, increase the chances of school dropout. Ottosen, Goll and Sørli (2019) support this saying that young people from dysfunctional families are among most vulnerable to develop mental problems at tender

age, leading to poor academic performance and dropout for students on both vocational and academic tracks. In Indonesia, Habibi (2017) cites main cause of school dropout as economic factors. Although primary and high schools has been free, parents still have to cater for school prime needs. Consequently, many children [dropouts] were looking for jobs in large cities.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the World Bank (2015) maintains that most students drop out before secondary schools and a sizeable number never return, due to several factors, including early marriages, lack of formal schools and low educational quality, which hinder enrolment and retention of learners. The World Bank (2015) further indicates that rural youths are therefore falling behind in accessing education than urban ones, due to factors stated earlier. Similarly, secondary school dropout rates remain high across the southern African region, due to the wide range of factors, including growing cases of household poverty, the negative impact of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, patriarchal attitudes contributing to the removal of young girls from school to care for their siblings or leading them in getting married before they finish school, inequitable distribution of educational resources and access to education, especially affecting marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, and people from rural areas (Charaf, 2019).

In the South African context, Mkwanzani and De Wet (2014) add that school dropout has pinned on numerous factors like poverty, substance abuse, untimely pregnancy, changes in family structure as well as academic related factors, such as lack of interest in school, poor quality education, poor academic performance and bad school experience.

2.4.2 Causes of Deaf learners' school dropout

There are various reasons for school dropout, according to different scholars (Landsburg et al., 2011; Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan & Gala, 2013; Gudyandga et al., 2014; Theunissen, Rieffe, Netten, Briare, Soede, Kouwenberg & Fryns, 2014; Duarte, Santos, Rego & Nunes, 2016; Mkandawire et al., 2016; Weber, 2016; Aranda, 2017; Mahlo, 2017; Ngobeni, 2017; Douglas & Murray, 2018) and this applies to all students,

including Deaf learners. These various reasons are divided into four categories or factors, namely individual or internal factors, family or socioeconomic factors, school or academic factors and societal factors. These factors might influence or affect the Deaf learners' learning and academic performances in school.

2.4.2.1 Individual or internal factors

There are diverse individual factors that contribute towards the causes of learners' school dropout. These factors are very significant to the Deaf learners' poor academic performances and also their school dropout.

a) Low self-esteem

Low self-esteem is found as one of the individual or internal factors that causes learners' school dropout. The study by McLeod (2012) argues that underachieving or poor academic performances has been listed among characteristics that best describes students with low self-esteem. Verma (2015) states that the reason some students fail repeatedly is because of low self-confidence. Learners find no need to obey the school rules and regulations. Consequently, they fall for suspension because of their latest misdemeanour. In addition, through the researcher's working experience of interpreting for Deaf learners in an educational setting, she has recognised that poor academic performance within Deaf learners cause them to repeat classes and are being left by their age mates to attend with younger learners. As a result, they isolate themselves, because of low self-esteem and confidence, and thus some decide to leave school or drop out significantly.

b) School disinterest

A body of literature has shown that Deaf learners lack interest in school as they do not meet the pass rate expectations of such schools, due to poor academic performance. Verma (2015) indicates that current generation is not capacitated in combating stressful predicament, for that matter, whenever they feel too much academic pressure, they give up and dropout. In most cases, classes are not immune to these learners. Additionally,

Verma (2015) again states that learners' lack of interest in school is caused by their lack of attention in whatever is being taught, and when they are pressurized to try, it is then that they deviate from right way of learning - they prefer dropping out of their school. Katulkar (2018) supports that a large number of learners discontinue their education and if one asks for the reason most common answer is lack of interest. Gottlieb (2015) supports this view on learners' lack of interest and asserts that students that dropout feel disengaged and disconnected to what is being taught in most classrooms.

c) Behavioural problems

Behavioural problems are also regarded as factors of school dropout by the literature. Naming a few, Douglas and Murray (2018), and WHO (2018) state that the impact of hearing loss is functional, especially on the performance of children, as in most cases, they have an increased rate of grade failure and a greater need for educational assistance. Some Deaf learners reflect behavioural problems like aggressiveness, for they do not feel comfortable at school and experience social and emotional impact, due to exclusion from communication, which reflects a significant impact on everyday life (WHO, 2018) and therefore, they decide to leave school and some never return. Baggett (2018) states that students who are dropping out of school have complex behavioural and academic problems and that is why they end up not returning to school. This situation seems to apply in Lesotho as well, because some Deaf learners dropping out of school somehow reflected bad behaviour and academic exertion.

d) Substance abuse

In Italy, school dropouts have higher rates of illegal drug use and alcohol abuse and this is a big challenge (Fernández-Suárez, Herrero, Pérez, Juarros-Basterretxea & Rodríguez-Díaz, 2016). In South African context, Weybright et al. (2017) indicate that learners at risk of dropout are heavier cigarette smokers as they began smoking at tender age than their low risk peers.

In Cape Town, "methamphetamine" is reported to be one of the drugs abused by high school students who appear mostly in absenteeism lists and dropout cases (Mnguni,

2014). He further explains that these learners who dropout also take alcohol and other illegal substances.

2.4.2.2 Family and Socioeconomic factors

Family and socioeconomic factors are some of the problems that cause learners to drop out of school. Under these factors, several elements, such as insufficient funds, parental lack of education and family structure are identified as contributing to the causes of Deaf learners' school dropout. These elements are discussed below:

a) Insufficient income

According to Douglas and Murray (2018), a socioeconomic factor is one of the predictors leading to the decision towards leaving school by learners. This issue is caused by unemployment and poverty, which affect Deaf learners as their parents find it difficult to pay their school fees, feed and clothe them (Douglas & Murray, 2016) due to unemployment and poverty. On the other hand, Gil, Antelm-Lanzat, Cacheiro-Gonzalez, and Perez-Navio (2019) point out that parents' or guardians' education level, income and their expectations affect learners and cause school dropout.

Distance to school can also be seen as another issue affecting learners, due to a lack of funds. This is because there are few schools accommodating Deaf learners, as a result, most of these learners are forced to migrate and settle nearer to their schools. All these factors apply to the Deaf learners in Lesotho, and consequently, they are mostly compelled to attend a selected number of schools, being the only ones suitable in accommodating Deaf learners from all ten districts of this country where they are equally taught with their hearing counterparts. Through the researcher's experience, most of these learners suffer from basic human rights, emanating from social ills, such as child-headed families, unemployment leading to severe poverty, lack of medical facilities and the distance factor to name but few. As a result the researcher sees these learners, who emerge from such marginalised backgrounds, struggling to make ends meet, apparently becoming stressed when missing their families, failing to meet other school requirements: school fees, buying stationery and any other necessities or going

on a vital school trip, but more importantly, failing in the acquisition of personal basic needs.

In Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular, there is violation of human right, because of economic issues and consequently dropout from secondary schools (Kainuwa, Yusuf & Saibon, 2018). Kainuwa et al. (2018) further explain that economic challenges among parents contribute towards school dropout, where poorer parents are forced to choose between family needs and school for the children. Hence, in most cases parents are involved in their children' withdrawal from school and gradually they introduce them to child labour or various illegal activities for fund raising (Kainuwa et al., 2018).

Through the researcher's experience, she has also noticed that inability to pay school fees and other costs of schooling can be another reason why learners have to give up their educational career. Meanwhile, this can be caused by unemployment among parents or guardians, their sickness or death. Verma (2015) points out that several hectic situations facing adolescents is looked upon to them as a helping hand in terms of family support. This reflects a negative impact on children as they are often stressed up by this huge responsibility forcing them to abandon their lives. In Zimbabwe, Chenge, Chenge and Maunganidze (2017) explain that some children are urged to help in developing family finances or wellbeing of their siblings. This is an indication that, similar situations can force Deaf learners to leave school or drop out, seeking jobs to aid their families and take care of their loved ones, where some of them never return to school.

b) Parental lack of education or illiteracy of the parents

The low educational level of parents weakens the family and creates domestic problems that adversely affect the value of education and leading children to drop out of school (Ghazi, Ali, Shahzad & Gulap, 2011; Chenge et al., 2017; Namakau, 2019). Through experience the researcher has seen that illiteracy of the parents may lead to poor family participation in Deaf learners' studies, thus there will be limited support granted to them, as well as less conversations about their studies and schooling by their parents. In contrasts, Duarte et al. (2016) assert that when parents are fully involved in the learning

process of their children, they are willing to help with assignments or become their role models. However, parental lack of education can be attributed to their low expectation and family structure. This is discussed below:

c) Low parental expectation

Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan and Gala (2013) stipulate that Deaf learners are believed to be incapable of learning and this results in parents and others having low expectations, because they think that deafness is an excuse for not providing the opportunities and support for their achievement. In most cases, families of Deaf learners reflect lowered expectations about them and these limited expectations reach the Deaf learners who in response begin to perceive their effort and attainment of education as a waste of time and resort to dropping out of school. Matlosa and Matobo (2007) with Douglas and Murray (2018) argue that parents are reluctant to invest in the education of disabled persons, due to low expectations because some feel it as a waste of time and money and no one will hire them. The researcher agrees with these views, some of the Deaf learners who come to school late are mostly older as compared to their hearing counterparts. This is because of the limited exposure to their environments, including the school system, as parents chose to leave them hidden at homes, due to cultural myths surrounding their births and fear of being incapable and also because disability among the Basotho has been a taboo (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007).

The study by Weber (2016) states that language deficiencies is one of the challenges Deaf learners face in the classroom. In other words, language problems or information communication could be seen impediment to Deaf learners which is also caused by a lack of parental involvement. Hence, family involvement is paramount to the overall development of Deaf children, specifically in the language and communication aspects (Garate, Batamula & Kite, 2016; Devkota, Murray, Kett & Groce, 2018). The researcher concurs with the above views, and this is because drawing from her personal experiences, where she discovered that language problems or lack of information communication by Deaf learners restricted their personal and educational life, as they struggled to express their views, and they could not have good relationships with their peers. Subsequently, Deaf learners end up developing negative attitudes towards

learning languages used at school and using Sign Language as their first language simultaneously, as this makes them become confused, because of their experiential shortage (Weber, 2016; Ntinda, Thwala & Tfusi, 2019).

d) Family structure

This is another element that causes Deaf learners' school dropout. Children from various family structures experience different challenges of which some may lead to school dropout, due to some reasons, namely income issues, children's relationship with their parents, changes in child-parent time spent together, parental involvement in their child's school work and many more (Chenge et al., 2017). In Bulgaria, Lavrentsova and Valkov (2019) indicate that children of single parent households may develop social and academic problems; they are more likely to become teen parents. So it is not surprising that in terms of family structure, the school dropout rate by learners from broken homes or single-parent families is high. This also affects Deaf learners as some of them are abandoned by their biological parents while some of them are living with divorced parents and others with single parents or are orphans. All these family structures might badly affect their academic performances, leading to their school dropout.

2.4.2.3 Academic factors

These factors are identified as school environment, teaching methods and materials; seating arrangements; learner-teacher relationships, as well as curriculum and assessment. These factors are explained below:

a) Teaching methods and materials

Teachers play a major role in providing a positive and suitable learning environment for Deaf learners through appropriate strategies (methods) and materials (resources). It is because they are expected to understand the learners' problems and cater for their education needs. Ngobeni (2017) declares that educators demonstrate and explain course material verbally to ensure that learners understand, learn and are fully informed

on taught concepts. She further states that whenever learners fail to understand, and educators being unable to give fairly good explanation, communication problem can result in poor academic performance. Gudyanga et al.'s (2014) study reports that teachers should teach in a Deaf friendly way, whereby when teaching they should stand in one place to engage the attention of their students and not distract them with constant movements. In addition, they should speak slowly and clearly, and repeat questions or comments during lessons (Gudyanga et al., 2014).

This hereby suggests that in order to enhance easy and better teaching and learning activities, teachers should use the latest pedagogical approaches, such as a learner-centred approach and instructional strategies where the medium of instruction could be Sign Language in consideration of the length of the instruction and discussions, which should be shorter or brief as they will be meaningful to Deaf learners. These latest approaches will help teachers to identify learners who struggle during the lesson and will have to support them to acquire some skills intended by the lesson given. On the other hand, the use of appropriate resources, both material and human, like visual (subject matter information boards, interactive whiteboards, flashcards and pictures) and technical support materials (videos and internet iPads with educational application) will assist teachers and the interpreter who will be used to supplement teachers' speech and facilitate Deaf learner's participation in classroom discourse or for instructions whenever working with Deaf learners for them to follow suit during lessons (Erbas, 2017).

Unfortunately, if teachers are not using the right teaching and learning approaches and resources, Deaf learners will suffer most as their educational needs will not be met, hence, they will lag behind as they will fail to understand the concept taught, they will reflect poor performance, have no confidence and develop low self-esteem and it will be where some will decide to dropout. This indicates the need for quality teacher education or training and supports for them to acquire the skills for handling all learners accordingly, especially those with disabilities, including Deaf learners (Mkandawire et al., 2016).

Aranda (2017) also stipulates that the shortage of teachers who specialise in Sign Language (thereafter, SL) affects teaching and learning due to little attention and support for Deaf learners. This implies that communication and learning, mainly through SL, stands as a barrier and these impacts badly on these learners in terms of the learning process: questions, discussions and clarifications on the learning activities, mostly in the absence of the interpreter. In support of this, Ngobeni (2017), indicates that poor foundation in SL as a first language may cause Deaf learners to divert from academic classes where Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) is followed.

Classroom acoustics and environment can be classified as unsympathetic, due to a lack of resources. There are no sound proof systems in Lesotho schools, and thus far, learners are easily distracted by sounds produced in and outside of the classrooms. Use of appropriate instructional materials: diagrams, pictures, graphs and flow charts - are essential in the teaching and learning to enhance communication that can help Deaf learners to work independently and give them a sense of achievement, as this will reduce language and reading demands (Mwanyuma, 2016). Again, through the researcher's experience, she has noticed that without the use of appropriate instructional materials, Deaf learners feel confused, uncomfortable and lost or struggle to participate in tutorials; taking some of the learning risks associated with the relatively unstructured and unsupportive environment. Deaf learners and other students, who are associated with speech impairment, have anxiety about performing in front of other learners as they cannot express themselves freely, because they have difficulty with grammatical and syntactical structure of English and have a limited vocabulary due to delayed spoken language development; all making them fall behind other learners in class (Mpofu & Chimhenga, 2013; Xie, Potmesil & Peters, 2014).

b) School environment and seating arrangement

According to Gudyanga et al. (2014) and Weber (2016), seating arrangements and proper classroom acoustics should be a major concern when working with Deaf learners. This is because the Hard-of-hearing who may require enough light for lip reading, but not fluorescent light, as it emits special sounds that interferes with hearing

aids and are in need of sound proof systems in classrooms (Gudyanga et al., 2014; Weber, 2016). Therefore, learning in an environment which is not learner friendly towards learners using hearing aids, makes these devices to pick up and amplify every detailed sound, irrespective of its relevance (Gudyanga et al., 2014). This says classroom should be of low controlled noise to protect Deaf learners from excess noise that will distract them. Classrooms should have carpets, suitable windows and walls, ceiling to trap and reduce noise or sound. There should also be appropriate floors to reduce noise from scrapping furnishers which can have rubber shoes attached to their legs (Gudyanga et al., 2014). The born Deaf learners need lighting too, which is an important tool for effective communication as they will be able to read signs from the SL interpreter and among themselves, hence we should consider the appropriate space between them and the SL interpreter, enough light and windows that should not be placed behind the teacher nor the interpreter, as they make it difficult to see the signs produced (Weber, 2016).

Weber (2016) reflects that Deaf learners need full visual resources and best seating arrangement for full participation. Hence, a need of “U” shapes seating arrangement, as to allow them to see the speaker, and engage fully in the conversation. The issues of seating plans and classroom acoustics become a barrier to Deaf learners in Lesotho, because of the “U” shape seating arrangements which seems to be a far-fetched idea, because the numbers of Deaf learners allocated in a classroom are a lot and there are shortages of teachers and interpreters, respectively.

c) Learner-teacher relationship

Good relationships between teacher and students with hearing impairment are essential, but due to the teachers’ attitude based on their lack of quality teacher education and preparation for teaching Deaf learners, no practicum experience as well as support, becomes a challenge (Musyoka, Gentry & Bartlett, 2016). In support Mkandawire *et al.* (2016), feels that teachers are not capacitated with necessary skills required to teach learners with different disabilities, Hence, their negative attitude and believe towards teaching learners with special educational needs which badly affect

these learners who require attention, failing which, they end up dropping out of school because they are excluded during lessons.

Weber (2016) emphasises benefits of good learner-teacher relationships when highlighting the impact of collaboration by recommending that teachers remain in constant close communication with a students and their parents, also ensuring the presence of an interpreter to assist with complete understanding and involvement of all for ongoing support for the Deaf learners. According to Gudyanga et al. (2014) study, teachers do not generally support inclusion and tentatively consider the regular classroom as the place where needs of learners with special educational needs could be adequately met. Many schools do not practice inclusive education, because they are concerned that in doing so, they will have a negative impact on their so-called normal students' academic progress and experience lower standards.

On the other hand, Naidoo (2008) argues that some educators are passionate, inspired and devoted to teaching Deaf learners as they believe it is necessary for all educators of Deaf learners to empower themselves with Deaf culture and Sign language skills. Hence, educators need more support and guidance through in-service training from the Department of Education. Similarly, Deaf learners also need more support so that they can do well in their academic work and stay in schools. Martin and Collie (2018) and The Educator (2019) indicate that if students have more negative student-teacher relationships, their engagement level decreases. This implies that negative learner-teacher relationships could develop bad feelings and experiences that may lead to school dropout among learners. But having positive learner-teacher relationships will help learners participate more in class, have more enjoyment in their learning, and therefore, their aspirations grow.

d) Curriculum and assessment

Curriculum and assessment issues are seen as one of the factors leading to school dropout. Duarte et al. (2016) indicate that students with Special Education Needs (thereafter, SEN), in particular, Deaf learners need curriculum modification for their educational background, although taking same external summative assessment tests as their hearing counterparts. Mwanyuma (2016) supports that Deaf learners require a

modified curriculum as an approach where educators should identify subjects to be covered by these learners and plan for their individual needs and abilities. In Lesotho, Learners with Special Educational Needs (thereafter - LSEN) are faced with a number of challenges because of a rigid curriculum reflecting difficulties during implementation, because of strategies and resources to be used that does not cater for their educational needs.

However, some adjustments have been put in place to support Deaf learners at school by the government, such as provision of SL interpreters and extra time for examinations (MoET, 2018). Hence, drastic and eminent measures are needed for their special assessment allowance. There is also a Lesotho Education Language Policy (2019) among the adjustments made, meant to enable provision for access to acquisition and maintenance of Lesotho's minority languages including SL, as official languages in the country and which will be included in our school curriculum, in order to ensure access to information and effective communication, as well as the right to bilingual education to Deaf learners. Certainly for Deaf learners this will be a matter of paramount significance if well designed SL curriculum can be incorporated in the national curriculum, as well as disseminated and implemented in school.

2.4.2.4 Societal factors

These factors are identified as peer pressure, fake unemployment opportunities and perceived unemployment after graduation, pregnancy and early marriage. They are discussed in detail below;

a) Peer pressure

A study revealed that students with poor academic performance are likely to drop out, due to increased negative influence from peers (Joanna, 2017). Omollo and Yambo (2017) in support, argue that in Kenya, most dropouts have been accredited to negative peer influence as they befriend ill-disciplined colleagues or the students may drop out of school due to pressure of rejection by peers, making them feel low self-esteem, lack of self-love and developing self-absorption and becoming misfit in the community. They

further indicate that outside negative influences may emanate from other school dropouts, lack of interest in gaining education, peer pressure and teen pregnancies accounted by higher percentage of girls who drop out of secondary school (Omollo & Yambo, 2017). Meanwhile, Mnguni (2014) reports that the reason peer pressure is seen as one of the crucial factors influencing young learners dropout is the need for sense of belonging and fitting in with their peer group, which causes stress and anxiety for them as well as affecting their participation in class or attendance at school.

b) Fake employment opportunities and perceived unemployment upon graduation

Fake opportunities in regard to employment and perceived unemployment upon graduation are regarded as complex issues towards school dropout. Some students do not see a need to carry on their education and this is where others look for money-making opportunities and drop out of school (Safari, 2016). These cases are also perceived in Deaf learners as some of them believe that there is no need to carry on with their studies when they see their companion jobless and staying home after graduating.

The job market plays a major role in one's decision towards school dropout. Hence, school dropout is influenced by the need for children to enter the job market, especially those from families facing financial hardships. It is because they need to contribute to their family budget or have a desire to possess their own finances (Soares, Fernandes, Nóbrega & Nicolella, 2015). This implies that learners, including those with hearing impairment are bound to leave their school and go to work, in order to earn a living.

c) Pregnancy and early marriage

This is another challenge experienced by Deaf learners, especially the female learner (girls). Teenage pregnancy and early marriage are also seen as predictors leading to school dropout (Douglas & Murray, 2018; Molupe, 2020; WHO, 2020). This is because the female learners will have to leave school in order to attend to their baby and maternal health care sessions where most of them never come back to school. Some of these learners, due to poverty and being teen mothers, might have to seek jobs in order to find a means of supporting and earning for their babies. Moreover, Jones, Presler-

Mashall and Stavropoulou (2018), imply that there are none availability of medical facilities for adolescents with disabilities. Evidence is reflected in their sexual experiences and access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information. This suggests that, Deaf learners have very little knowledge of SRH issues, because their parents have no signing skills and they do not discuss these issues with them, notwithstanding the fact that it is a taboo.

On the point of early marriage, Deaf learners leave or drop out of school to get married. Meanwhile, some voluntarily do so, but in most cases, girls become victims for dropping out of school and getting married and mostly some after becoming pregnant. All these reflect the relationship between early marriage and school dropout, which restricts Deaf learners, especially the female ones in having the ability to access quality education as a result of issues related to child bearing and child care responsibilities, giving the evidence that pregnancy and early marriage are predictors of school dropout (Douglas & Murray, 2018; Birchall, 2019). This is also supported by Sekine and Hodgkin (2017) who indicate that school dropout and child marriage are interrelated and it has a huge negative impact on girls, because it reduces their livelihood opportunities, destroys their health and wellbeing together with that of their little ones, hinders their ability to realise their potential and their rights, mainly their right to education, as well as makes them fail to become compatible members of the community.

2.5 UNDERSTANDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

Various countries suffer similar negative economic and psychosocial consequences for students who leave school before graduation. Meanwhile, there can be long term and short term effects of the consequences of school dropout by Deaf learners. For example, Deaf learners have bad educational experiences and lack good opportunities in the labour market, low wages, and higher rates of unemployment as compared to their hearing counterparts (Mwanyuma, 2016). In addition, Koc, Zorbaz, and Demirtas (2020), argue that young people who leave education without an upper secondary education diploma, which is often a minimum requirement to access knowledge driven labour markets, run the risk of being faced with a lack of economic opportunities, long

term unemployment, poverty, welfare dependence and social exclusion. In support, Mwanyuma (2016) indicates that no exposure to equal educational opportunities in Deaf learners results in a lack of skills and poor qualifications making them incompetent in the job market.

In addition, dropouts are at high risk of health challenges: poor physical and mental health as well as social problems and in most cases experience lack of opportunities over the course of their lives (Hobbs & Power, 2013). Marphatia, Reid and Yajnik (2019) also maintain that boys who drop out of school generally work on family farms, enter the labour market or undertake vocational training, while girls tend to marry or are forced into early marriage.

Furthermore, Vaughn, Salas-Wright, and Maynard (2014) state that investigation reflects lower academic levels being linked to poor health status. Therefore, this implies that school dropout result in reduced life chances: no employment, diseases due to poor eating and exercising habits. Mkwanzani (2014), adds that non-pecuniary effects of school dropout encompasses decreased critical-thinking and social skills, parenting abilities, as well as one's marriage chances, stability thereof and increased levels of fertility.

2.5.1 Short-term effects of school dropout

In the aspect of the short-term effects, most of the youth who dropped out from school are usually the troublemakers around the community. When youth drop out of school, this becomes a great challenge to them, their families and communities, for they end up roaming around and being exposed to undesirable activities and behaviours. As a result they increase all socioeconomic issues that the community is facing, such as crime, poverty, unemployment, infectious diseases, like HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy, due to a lack of information on sexual behaviour, alcohol consumption and using drugs and becoming addicted in using illegal substances (Kattan & Szekely, 2015; IPL, 2020). An increase in road accidents was also identified as an effect of school dropout. McCormick (2015) states that communities should benefit from tight laws from traffic

department but this is not fully accomplished because there are many people who do not finish school and dying in traffic accidents than college graduates. The researcher acknowledges traffic accidents issue because through experience she has noticed that young school children abscond from school to roam around or hawk on the streets and this makes them to be involved in road accidents.

2.5.2 Long-term effects of school dropout

Long-term disadvantages include low educational attainment and the inability to access better economic opportunities, like a lower likelihood of acquiring and securing employment, low wages and a lower lifetime of wealth leading to general economic disadvantages and higher levels of informality (Lee-St. John, Walsh, Raczek, Vuilleumier, Foley, Heberle, Sibley & Dearing, 2018; Ramsdal, Bergvik & Wynn, 2018). The examples of long-term disadvantages listed above are experienced by the youth as a result of leaving school without completion, who will be forced to compete with those having educational certificates. Ramsdal et al. (2018) further indicate that students with low educational attainment have a high risk of mental disorders, especially a higher risk of anxiety and depression, as well as attempted suicide. This is resulting from the feeling of failure as one will be struggling to mend his life for better future. More so, issues like early marriages, poor parental care, as well as prostitution, which breeds unwanted pregnancy and infectious diseases are also the long-term effects of school dropout among Deaf learners.

2.6 THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS IN MITIGATING DEAF LEARNERS' SCHOOL DROPOUT

There is a need for various role-players and stakeholders in the Lesotho Educational System to support and care for the needs of Deaf learners. This implies that there is a need for school support networks, such as learners', teachers', and interpreters' school management committees, parents, community, institutions of higher education, policy-makers, various organizations, NGOs and the government to collaborate harmoniously,

in order to assuage the issue of school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho using SSN to focus on the skills, strengths, abilities and potentials of the Deaf learners as people who are able to define and recognise their own issues, as well as being able to make informed decisions on their own (Creswell, 2014).

2.6.1 Peers/learners

It is imperative to note that Deaf learners do need the support of their hearing peers in order to feel included, accepted and encouraged in their learning. Borup (2016), states that peers can collaborate in the learning process by modelling good behaviour and improving students' learning using appropriate resources: psychological and physical tools. He further explains that social presence and personal connections that are established through meaningful interactions are of great value to cognitive outcomes. Again, learner-learner interactions help in the development of important skills. Researcher concurs with this issue because both Deaf and Hearing learners need to have good relationships with their peers so as to work smoothly, accept, care and support one another for them to perform well academically.

Learner-learner interaction is encouraged because it benefits learners in understanding the course content as they become motivated and participate actively in their learning. This interaction learning is regarded as means of support in which learners collaboratively establish explanations and understandings of materials and phenomena within their school environment (Kuna, 2012). This implies that interaction is crucial in maintaining the wellbeing of all members of the community. This is because interaction is also believed to lead towards better development of students' outcomes. When failing, some Deaf learners will find it hard to fit in and they will feel unwelcome and decide to drop out of school.

2.6.2 Teachers

The inclusion of Deaf learners in the mainstream education system was a trend developed over the past years. Naidoo (2008) explains that educators should be passionate to teach students with SEN, including Deaf learners. It is therefore

necessary for educators to ensure that they are capacitated with Deaf culture and in SL. The researcher concurs with this idea, because through learning SL, teachers will have better communication with their Deaf learners and this will help Deaf learners to participate more during teaching and learning processes, they will enjoy their learning, establish a good rapport with teachers and therefore will feel welcome and perform well in their academics.

Teachers working with Deaf learners need to develop positive attitude and belief in order to build good learner-teacher relationships, as this will help them work easily with these learners, whose enjoyment level in learning will be increased and they will be participating more in class (Martin & Collie, 2018). Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP) (2018) and Ansary (2017) indicate that teachers should be professionally capacitated as to increase their skills, knowledge and experiences so that they can develop positive attitude and belief towards LSEN, including Deaf learners, identify their teaching and learning needs and cater for them. More so, they are required to use appropriate teaching methods and materials, as well as instructional measures, also having clear policies for teachers that will guide their schools for improved discipline, which is most helpful for education (Ansary, 2017; LIEP, 2018).

2.6.3 Interpreters

All teachers and schools want their students to succeed. All parents want to be a part of their child's education and know what is happening in the classroom. Communication barriers should never keep these things from happening for anyone. Students and parents deserve and are entitled to interpretation services that help ensure student success (Language People, 2020).

SL interpreters play a major role in Deaf education as they are responsible for helping Deaf individuals to understand what is being taught. This implies that sign language interpreters should be trained. Thus, they need to be proficient in listening, observing and signing skills (Sign Language Interpreter, 2019). The interpreter is also expected to have a good relationship with Deaf learners so that he or she will concur in working with

them and eventually developing their trust in his or her competence (Berge & Ytterhus, 2015). The interpreter will therefore be used to supplement teachers' speech and facilitate Deaf learners' participation in classroom discourse or for instructions when working with Deaf learners for them understand and participate during the lesson (Erbas, 2017).

Educational interpreters' role is to provide communication access to Deaf students by acting as a mediator between a Deaf learner, teacher and other learners, representing the classroom instruction, teacher/student dialogue, and relevant sound information in verbal mode of communication used by their hearing counterparts (Classroom Interpreting, 2020). An interpreter should ensure that the Deaf access all sound information and also to convey information from both hearing and Deaf students as well as the teacher in consideration individual's language level, academic competency, social/emotional development and interpersonal skills (Classroom Interpreting, 2020).

Davitti (2015) indicates that an interpreter becomes the third player mediating parent-teacher meetings not sharing the same language, by enabling the meeting to run smoothly, maintaining its cooperative character, establishing a common ground and giving both parties the possibility to fully understand what is going on and interact on a level playing field. Again interpreters have to ensure parental involvement, therefore need to create opportunities for parents, who normally occupy the most vulnerable position, to talk and express their views, thus contributing to a truly bi-directional flow of information and knowledge integration (Davitti, 2015). Language People (2020) support that there are many ways in which schools can work to include limited English proficiency parents and one way can be that interpreters should be provided for parent-teacher conferences.

Language People (2020) state that as an often-overlooked community, Deaf students and parents have the same needs and rights as English Language learners. Thus Deaf learners are mainstreamed in regular school programs. Therefore, interpreters need to be available for these students. They further indicate that when a face-to-face interpreter is not feasible, video-remote interpretation services can serve as a viable

alternative. Schools and school systems should also provide interpreters for other education-related events, such as school board meetings (Language People, 2020).

2.6.4 School management committee/administration

Amselem (2014) states that all stakeholders must be observant to non-academic factors leading to poor academic performance: family, neighbourhood, or community influences. Once these factors are identified, appropriate policies can be developed, reviewed and implemented to rectify the barriers to school completion. Musyoka et al. (2016) indicated that school administration should emphasise family support in order to implement educational goals at home and to avoid conflict in maintaining students' basic needs, including clothing and feeding. Schools are also expected to have strong management system, involving participation of various stakeholders: teachers, parents and many more others for developing good management culture to facilitate the professional development of teachers and create conducive school environment offering balanced learning opportunities in five aspects of development: moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic as to nurture learners to become responsible citizens (Education Bureau, 2018).

This might assist teachers to have more understanding of deafness and how to work with Deaf learners by collaborating with parents as they are not trained to do so as to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners and other learners at the selected high school and all schools in Lesotho. Researcher therefore hopes that this study will be advantageous to teachers, whereby they might approach Deaf learners in a better way. They might change and have positive attitudes towards Deaf learners as they might then teach in a Deaf-friendly way, using appropriate strategies and resources. They may be encouraged to demonstrate their multilevel competency to improve quality of teaching, create thriving people, a flexible and conducive environment for everyone to bring their talents and positively contribute to development of their classroom, family, future employer and community (Peters, 2015; Ghofar et al., 2018).

2.6.5 Parents

Parents are expected and required to be fully involved in their children's academics. This view is supported by LIEP (2018) who reports that parental involvement in school should be encouraged and parents should be asked to have positive attitudes towards education of their children especially those with disabilities. According to LIEP (2018), this will help them to provide for their children's personal and academic needs as well as protecting them and make sure that they are not subjected to cultural practices, like early marriage and circumcision that negatively affect their wellbeing. Parents are expected to monitor and evaluate their children's activities, with strong disapproval of alcohol and drug use and encourage a zero-tolerance atmosphere (Fernández-Suárez et al., 2016). Jach, Sun, Loton, Chin, and Waters (2018) add that parental involvement and family influence could be predictors of a student's school achievement. Hence, parents having good relationships with teachers, which makes things better as they will share information on how to help children to perform well at school, and as support system they will acknowledge achievements of their children, will inspire them to use and develop their recognised and overlooked strengths (Jach *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, based on the above view, this suggests that when parents accept the fact that their child is deaf and are able to stop denying the implication of deafness, they might be able to assist their Deaf child to accept his or her condition and also enable them to develop their capacity to emerge and become a unique person.

2.6.6 Community

Strong interrelations between school and community can result in high educational levels and also assist in provision of extra mural activities (Iqbal, 2018). Hence, our communities will be providing resources and recreation for children, youth and adults. This says that through good partnership and community engagement, schools can be able to gain experience, give real-life learning opportunities, support and resources that will improve students' learning and well-being. Emphasis on this has been made on the importance of community involvement in helping and supporting Deaf learners become more integrated and acceptable in their respective communities. Rosen (2016) points

out that involving the community will help the school to multiply its effects by continuing education, creating greater awareness, enthusiasm and other opportunities. In order to minimise feelings of isolation and disconnection in our learners as to help them develop a sense of belonging and interactivity, community involvement is a good step to take (Phirangee, 2016). As schools remain the most feasible and accessible route to education, the community has to take part in their children's education by giving their support.

This explains that when understanding challenges faced by Deaf learners at school and the concept of SSN and how they can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners, the community is identified as a support network that could be used to support Deaf learners' academic performances as a source to ease their dropout from school. International Survey Associates, (2016) add that communities' involvement does support learning; students eventually achieve higher grades, avail themselves at school, stay in longer in school and enrol in institutions of higher learning. In addition, local communities can also create community services to assist students address challenges they might be facing outside classroom connecting them to various resources and information needed in daily life (Anderson, 2019). Meanwhile, through experience the researcher has found that some of the Deaf learners and their families suffer on account of unemployment and poverty and it can be helpful for them to be included in family-community resource centres to be assisted with resources and information for their better living.

Nevertheless, the National Association of the Deaf (thereafter, NAD, 2020) motivates members of the Deaf community to provide information and support to families of Deaf children by becoming mentors and making themselves available through informal networking. This clearly suggests that members of the hearing community can also join the programme by learning SL. This will be of benefit to the Deaf learners and their families as these members can serve as role models in helping them learn SL and provide communication strategies. The hearing members can also act as volunteers in school programmes and related community events as Deaf learners and their parents are eager for shared information and experience by the community.

2.6.7 Schools and institutions of higher education

Schools are important in child and youth development. As such, schools also function as protective factors for they benefit learners in different ways; they promote safety, motivation, good relationships, and support (Osher, Kendziora, Spier & Garibaldi, 2014). They are required to address the problem of violence in schools, as well as to create violence-free zones. Subsequently, schools are also expected to integrate academic content with skills-based approaches through career guidance (Amselem, 2014). Schools also become gate of opportunities through family involvement and collaborate with community to ensure that Deaf learners have supportive learning environment at school and at home (National Centre of Education Statistics, 2017).

On the other hand, the problem of school dropout among Deaf learners is a regarded as a fact that leads to only few of them finishing their high school and going into higher education institutions. LIEP (2018) reports that there is a small number of learners with SEN accommodated by institutions of higher learning in Lesotho and are enrolled in the undergraduate programmes provided by only three institutions namely; National University of Lesotho (NUL), Lesotho College of Education (LCE) and Limkomkwing University of Technology (LUCT). Therefore, having only three higher institutions of learning accommodating LSEN, including Deaf learners, shows that other institutions are not engaged in inclusive education and does not align with the United Nations Conventions towards the provision of education for LSEN. Thus, higher education institutions in Lesotho also need to make reasonable adjustments to provide accommodation, funding and supportive resources to enable students with SEN to access their education (McGuckin, Shevlin, Bell & Devecchi, 2013). The researcher hopes that this might make higher education institutions reconsider their working strategies: training of educators to know how to work with LSEN and recognise SSN as a good approach towards mitigating challenges at school and in daily life, modify teaching styles and materials, school culture and environment, special arrangements for assignments, as well as assessments and many more.

2.6.8 Policy-makers

Policy-makers are also significant in the education system. Their roles include monitoring of school and classroom size, teacher education and certification, teacher pay, teaching methods, curricular content, graduation requirements among other (Santosh, 2014). Institute for Educational Leadership (2020) emphasises that a policy-maker is required to support a vision of learning. It further states that policy-makers play a vital role in creating good relationships among other policy-makers, school and community leaders

Policy-makers should include diverse voices in making policies and their reforms and join collaborations with other stakeholders in Deaf education to give adequate support and rectify challenges faced by Deaf learners at school. They should cater for learners' education needs and help them stay at school, perform well and enrol in institutions of higher learning. They should help learners to bring their talents to bear results that will contribute towards developing autonomy in their families and communities (McCamey & Payne, 2015; Peters, 2015; Zwart, Korthagen & Attemma-Noordewier, 2015).

Mwanyuma (2016) states that school visits to where Deaf learners are accommodated is vital hence, policy-makers should visit schools for learners with SEN to learn about the needed support for them and give support like helping in provision of an environment that is barrier-free, such as classrooms and teaching and learning resources. In addition, Amselem (2014) indicates that in order to improve school graduation rates and education quality, we should identify learners who are at high risk of dropping out and why. Policy-makers are then to investigate how to develop an advantageous learning environment in schools and communities to advance the non-cognitive skills needed for success.

2.6.9 Government and Non-governmental Organizations (thereafter, NGOs)

Government agencies and NGOs are expected to provide support and assistance towards enhancing the communication between Deaf learners and their families. This will be done through holding workshops where parents, guardians and siblings would

learn the basics of SL so that they could communicate effectively with their children and help in their development holistically. In addition, the provision of education funding for learners with SEN, including Deaf learners could also be of great help on the principle of inclusive education, irrespective of one's age, ethnicity, gender, disability and/or social background (Chiwandire & Vincent, 2019).

Through experience, the researcher has learned that the student fund from the National Manpower Development Secretariat (thereafter, NMDS) at the higher education institutions in Lesotho is playing a major role to enable students, including LSEN to proceed in further education, but with a few numbers of LSEN in this sponsorship. McGuckin et al. (2013) and Majoko (2018) pose that the governments and NGOs should provide support: personal, academically, technological, and financial, as well as human and material resources, in order to promote their greater access for students with SEN to higher education. It is also imperative and thoughtful if NMDS funding programmes can be non-repayable for students with SEN (Chiwandire & Vincent, 2019).

For teaching and learning support, the government can realise that schools require making reasonable adjustments (Victoria State Government, 2019) for inclusion of LSEN. Governments should ensure training of teachers working with Deaf learners to capacitate them to effectively work with these learners in both primary and secondary school contexts (Ntinda et al., 2019). This will be beneficial for them and will help them teach in a Deaf-friendly way, using appropriate modified teaching strategies and resources, possibly with the usage of electronic devices, which are user-friendly for accessibility and adaptability: hearing-aids, whiteboards, projectors, caption for videos and many more. They will be careful with the classroom acoustics, appropriately and welcoming, for Deaf learners should have a good seating arrangement and specialist equipment like a lighting system, personal wireless and sound field system to enable them to access and assimilate visual information from the interpreter, as well as a clear view of the teacher and other students (Gudyanga et al., 2014), resulting in a better level of concentration with their acquaintance in the Fourth Industrial World. Thus, their inability may not mean incapability.

The provision of human resources is needed, as there should be provision of SL interpreters who should be trained and certified, because sign language interpreters require many different skills and qualities, which include language knowledge in working languages, interpreting skills and subject specific knowledge (Heyerick & Vermeerbergen, 2012) in an education setting. There should also be provision of specialist teachers of the Deaf to work with teachers and support staff to address the needs of Deaf learners (Victoria State Government, 2019). This implies that governments and curriculum developers could include SL as one of the official languages in the country, as it may open opportunities for Deaf and Hearing learners to be able to learn together and become mentors. Specifically, this may help Deaf learners to access their right to bilingual education as its aim is to support, develop, and maintain the child's first language so that their second language could also be developed (Garate et al., 2016). This clearly indicates that Deaf learners could be giving an opportunity to learn SL as their first language, as well as learn Sesotho and English as their second and third language so that they could be able to identify and differentiate their structures and use them correctly. The next section discusses the factors inhibiting the use of the SSN to mitigate Deaf learners' school dropout.

2.7 FACTORS INHIBITING THE USE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS IN MITIGATING DEAF LEARNERS' SCHOOL DROPOUT

This section discusses the diverse factors hindering the use of SSN in mitigating Deaf learners' school dropout. These factors are discussed in detail below:

2.7.1 Lack of adequate teachers' training and professional development

Lack of adequate teachers' training and professional development activities is seen as a barrier in easing the issue of Deaf learners' school dropout. OECD (2009) indicates that teachers are required to be involved in professional development activities, in order to prepare them for all career challenges they may face in future, as well as enabling them attain high standards and retain a high-quality teacher positions. Herbert-Smith (2019)

claims that professional development activities help teachers to develop their knowledge and skills to current needs so that they can deliver high-quality teaching and impact positively on students' academic progress. Furthermore, professional development will open new possibilities, new knowledge and new skills, leading to increased confidence for teachers (Herbert-Smith, 2019).

Meanwhile, Mogashoa (2018) argues that because teachers are lifelong learners, there is need for an ongoing education for them through workshops, seminars and training courses. Mogashoa (2018) further explains that upgrading activities: courses or workshops, education conferences or seminars, qualification developmental programmes, observations at other schools, participating in networks with teachers, mainly for the capacitation of teachers, individual or collaborative researches or a topic of professional interest as well as assisting and peer observations and coaching can assist in teacher development in order to stay abreast of new trends and learn new strategies, techniques and methods for classroom activities.

Moreover, developing good relationship between teachers and learners with hearing impairment is essential, but due to the teachers' attitudes, which is based on their lack of quality teacher education and support, it becomes a barrier towards mitigating school dropout, as most teachers have difficulties in teaching Deaf learners as they lack proper or adequate training and preparation for teaching Deaf learners and no practicum experience with them (Mkandawire et al., 2016; Musyoka et al., 2016). This clearly depicts that teachers develop negative attitudes towards Deaf learners, because of their incompetence's.

2.7.2 Policies and curriculum issues

The Victoria State Government (2019) explains that there should be a provision of specialist teachers of the Deaf to work with teachers and support staff to address the needs of Deaf learners. The researcher also thinks that it is important that the government include SL as one of the official languages in the country. Equally important, this may open opportunities for Deaf learners and Hearing students to learn

together. It could also help Deaf learners to access their right to bilingual education as to develop a second language (Garate et al., 2016). As a result, Deaf learners may be given an opportunity to learn SL as their first language and this should be included in the national curricula while giving the opportunity to learn Sesotho and English as their second and third language, in order to identify and differentiate their structures and use them correctly.

Gaad (2010) argues that inclusion has short falls globally owing to its inherent nature such as rigid curricular, syllabi and assessment specifications, diverse learning needs, curriculum delivery and many more. However, Duarte et al. (2016) indicate that students with SEN, including Deaf learners, should have modified curriculum for their educational betterment, despite taking the same external summative-assessment tests as their counterparts. LIEP (2018) also concurs with the above view and indicates that the Lesotho curriculum offers a little for individual's educational needs in terms of pedagogy, instructional materials and assessment strategies. LIEP (2018) also identified that the assessment models, in most schools, are standardised and generally administered traditionally with the use of pencil and paper. On that note, these limit the participation of some LSEN, although some assistance is provided for national examinations for example provision of large printed question papers, transcribers, transcription of print into Braille, sign language interpreters and extra time, still there is much to be done for LSEN (LIEP, 2018).

The above challenges with policies and the curriculum in Lesotho are indicated as other factors resulting to school dropout among Deaf learners and seem as inhibiting factors towards the use of SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners as Deaf learners do not fully access quality education in our schools, as they fail to perform well. This is because of a lack of legislation support in meeting the needs of learners with special educational needs, like provision for special assessment allowance, adapted curriculum, bilingual rights and many more. All these challenges result in poor academic work among Deaf learners, causing grade retention, which reduces their self-esteem, impacts on their social adjustment, behaviour, self-competence, and attitudes towards

school, as well as causing stress for them and with most of them deciding to drop out of school (Duarte et al., 2016).

2.7.3 Little or lack of parental involvement

Matlosa and Matobo (2007) with Douglas and Murray (2018) argue that little or no adult support or lack of parental involvement is a barrier to the use of SSN to mitigate Deaf learners' school dropout. This is because parents are reluctant to invest in the education of disabled persons, which is caused by their low expectations as some of them feel it is a waste of time and money as no one will hire them (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007). People with disabilities were considered a stigma and not given priority when coming to school. For instance, through experience, the researcher has noticed that Deaf learners often come to school late and are older than their peers (hearing counterparts), because of their limited exposure to their environment, hidden at homes, cultural myths surrounding their births and fear of being incapable (Matlosa & Matobo, 2007). All these emerge from the deeply rooted societal myths that individuals with disabilities are unable to become better persons. Deaf learners are also considered by many to be incapable of learning and this tentatively results to stakeholders involved in the education system and others of having low expectations, and deafness is taken as an excuse for not providing opportunities and support for their achievements (Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan & Gala, 2013). These limited expectations from teachers, and/or service providers and other professionals, which are then transferred to parents and then the child, make the Deaf learners who in response begin to perceive their efforts and attainments of education as a farfetched ideal, and apparently resort to dropping out of school (Szymanski, Lutz, Shahan & Gala, 2013; Namakau, 2019).

2.7.4 Language deficiency

This is one of the significant factors that hinder using the SSN to mitigate Deaf learners' school dropout. Weber (2016) confirms that language deficiency is one of the challenges experienced by Deaf learners in their classroom. Through the researcher's

experience she has found language deficiency restricting all the activities of Deaf learners, based on their personal and educational life respectively, as they struggle to express their views, and cannot have good relationships with their peers, and subsequently, such learners develop negative attitudes to the environment and many decide to drop out of school when they feel unwelcome in the school environment, because of the challenges they would be facing.

Baker and Scott (2016) explain that multilingual learners who are deaf normally encounter difficulty to access visual languages, due to delay in language development and late enrolment in school. These learners will be exposed and expected to learn languages: SL and English other than their family's native languages and therefore, live in multicultural, diverse where they are surrounded by several languages they may be learning simultaneously. The researcher concurs with this idea because this is what happens with Deaf learners in Lesotho who the researcher considers as multilingual learners as they also experience delay in language development and late enrolment. When getting to school, Deaf learners start learning SL from other Deaf learners and English from the teachers other than their family's native languages. In our case, Lesotho Deaf learners will be learning SL, English and Sesotho as their primary languages for learning and others using IsiXhosa, IsiPhuthi and IsiNdebele for communicating with their families (LELP, 2019).

Through experience, the researcher has noticed that the process of learning these different languages simultaneously, seem to be stressful to our Deaf learners, mainly because of a lack of early language access and late enrolment. The other problem caused by language deficiency in our Deaf learners is poor academic work, as they fail to get better marks in English, which is regarded as the passing subject by the National Examination Council of Lesotho. The other problem is of not getting good marks in Sesotho, but being expected to have a minimum of two languages written in their final examinations. These language challenges reflect a negative impact on most of our Deaf learners, as they fail their examinations and, as a result they are forced to repeat classes and this is when most decide to dropout, while others are forced to dropout as they would have lost their sponsorship, due to their failure.

2.7.5 Grade and age of the learner

According to WHO (2018) and Douglas and Murray (2018), the grade and age of the learners can also become a barrier to the mitigation of school dropout. The study by Douglas and Murray (2018) shows that impact of hearing loss is functional, especially in academic performance of children in most cases have increased the rate of grade failure and created a greater need for educational assistance. Therefore, the condition of poor academic performance with Deaf learners can cause them to repeat classes or grades and they will be left by their classmates to be in a new class. This causes them to isolate themselves, because of a lack of self-esteem and confidence, due to grade repetition (Douglas & Murray, 2018). As a result, some of the Deaf learners, based on the above issue, develop behavioural problems like aggressiveness, because they do not feel comfortable and experience negative social and emotional impacts, due to exclusion from communication, which reflects a significant impact on everyday life and therefore their decision to leave school and some never return (WHO, 2018).

On the issue of the age of the learners, Deaf learners often come to school later and are older than their peers (hearing counterparts), for that matter older Deaf learners in class with younger classmates struggle and have a poor academic record, resulting in grade retention, which reduces their self-esteem, impacts on their social adjustment, behaviour, self-competence, and attitudes towards school, as well as causing stress for them and most of them deciding to drop out of school (Duarte et al., 2016). Hence, these factors affect the use of SSN as Deaf learners continue leaving school and not accessing basic quality education and failing to be compatible community members.

2.8 DIVERSE STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE SCHOOL DROPOUT BY THE SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS

2.8.1 Learner-learner approach

This can be a good strategy used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners, because it requires openness, collectiveness and self-intelligence – it allows for better memorization, increased collaboration and knowledge sharing (Souci, 2021). There should be a well-versed student corner to aid one another in a view to be able to air out their views freely – they build more of a bond, trust and respect (SpriggHR, 2021). Sharing of ideas may come in handy for advancement of stress-free and tolerance among the same age-mates. Frequent interactions may improve behaviour change and propel learners to build a sense of dignity and self-worth. This approach could further establish oneness, hope and different dimensions or perceptions on how learners interact, such that the surfacing antagonistic ideas could be identified and ironed out amicably. Rapid social games might improve learners' understanding and cooperation for there could be more life-situations or moments to reflect on and collective shifts to clear the horizon. Above all, learning each other's mother-tongue language could make communication easy.

2.8.2 Parental involvement

Parental involvement is another strategy to mitigate school dropout and there should be regular parent-parent meetings with Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) and the school, in a view to find common workable approaches to handle such learners. Such meetings should be held in accordance with a plan of sensitizing most parents to own up, comprehend hardships of these learners and their acceptance in families. Good parent-teacher relationships should also be escalated to the level of making or moulding confident self-possessed learners as this will help kids succeed academically, in social competencies and emotional well-being (Morin, 2021). Parents should mobilise for the necessary provision of their children's needs (Chen, 2021). Parents should be willing to collaborate with other stakeholders within the education fraternity in order to

enhance possible measures suitable for learning and their will should take centre stage. Similarly, the attendance of parent meetings aiming at acquisition and understanding of LSEN needs and precautionary methods to be used in processes of teaching and learning, should be put into practice (King, 2019).

2.8.3 Teacher and interpreter professional development

There is a need to have well-trained and versatile educators working closely with well-trained SL interpreters in a school environment. They should act swiftly and with massive determination to deliver appropriate content with the best pedagogies that are user-friendly and contemporary to the Deaf learners. Utter commitment to alleviate language deficiency will propel Deaf learners to be self-willed, such that they will possess and portray self-love as opposed to loneliness, aggression, hatred and low self-esteem.

The teachers should develop and build capacity in ensuring that there is effective communication lines create a blog or corner as a student platform of communication or interaction from learner-parent and teacher relationships for better learning outcomes for students, finding new ways to teach and skills, knowledge and insight in organizing and management of classroom and educational resources (MeraEvents, 2020). When all professionals working with Deaf learners are well provided with materials and better skills for these learners, they may be in a pole position to make meaningful contributions and influence them in staying in school.

2.8.4 Community involvement

Smooth inclusion, due to acceptance and understanding of LSEN, including Deaf learners in community projects directed to school activities, may play a vital role in seeing the school as a place to belong. Members of the community being from local businesses, civic organizations, charities, non-profit foundations and other groups should act voluntarily as resource persons coming in before, during, or after the school

day, frequently for that matter (PrideSurveys, 2016) for helping in the acquisition of materials needed and fund raising for tuition fees. This could help to sustain the lives of LSEN in schools. Members of community should further take the initiative to learn SL in a view to pave the way for smooth interactions and understanding, such that LSEN may not feel left out.

Regular seminars within the community may also improve the social and academic ties, in order to disseminate the information and eradicate the line demarcation between school and community. On the same wave-length, teachers should encourage learners to be interpreters to cultivate and deepen roots of regular presence in schools (Darden, 2019). Teachers should also create cues and counselling sessions and motivational talks with professionals, such that learners might stay captivated within the school set-up. Teachers should also pay a visit at homes of learners for clear assessment and ascertain means of getting to know them better.

2.8.5 Policy-makers

Policy-makers should create clear guidelines, teaching methods or pedagogy and/or materials (resources), as well as inclusive assessment to different styles and the pace of learners with SEN, including Deaf learners for their empowerment (The New Learn, 2016). They should give a hearing ear to diverse voices and strive towards reforms for meeting the needs of LSEN for social and economic advancements in this contemporary world. The idea of bilingual rights should be taking a centre stage, such that the integrated programmes can be easily adopted and assimilated by learners and teachers respectively.

2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter reviews the relevant literature in relation to the study by examining the concept of deafness and who a Deaf learner is, as well as discussing the concept of school dropout and its causes. Furthermore, literatures on the consequences of school

dropout were also discussed, followed by the short-term and long-term effects of school dropout on Deaf learners. Furthermore, the chapter also explored the factors inhibiting the use of SSN to mitigating Deaf learners' school dropout and the various strategies that could be used to mitigate school dropout by the SSN. However, the next chapter presents and discusses the theoretical framework that was adopted as a lens to frame this study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the relevant literature in relation to the conceptualisation of school dropout, its consequences and how it can be mitigated through the use of SSN. This chapter presents the theoretical framework employed to frame and guide this study, which is the strength-based theory by Donald Clifton, to understand and explore how SSN can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. This chapter concludes with a brief summary.

3.2 THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY

The strength-based approach is found under a lens of positive psychology - work practice theory which is about person's ability and strength to make choices and manage own life (Stoerkel, 2019). It is a good approach for developing individuals' strengths, making them become resourceful persons resilient in devastating conditions they may come across in life (Stoerkel, 2019). Psychology Today (2020) regard strength-based approach as another form of therapy and counselling meant for internal strengths that will repair our weaknesses, failure, and shortcomings. Meanwhile, in the study by Duan and Bu (2019), the strength-based theory is regarded as a model for positive psychology towards the reduction of negative emotions (i.e. anxiety, stress and depression) and the promotion of well-being, as it is and focuses on strengths without spotlighting deficiencies. Zwart et al. (2015), in their account of what a strength-based approach entails, emphasise that it is the idea of promoting awareness of a cognitive, emotional and motivational aspect, developing autonomy and giving support in enacting qualities and inspiration in practice. Jach et al. (2018), in support of the assertions of a strength-based theory, claim that parents should be a strong support system in their child's life and have to acknowledge things their child is able to do well and encourage

him or her to use and develop realised and unrealised strengths in him. This theoretical framework supports the idea of increasing happiness and decreasing depression symptoms (Gander, Proyer, Ruch & Wyss, 2012).

3.2.1 Origin of strength-based theory

The present study is located in educational psychology, informed by strength-based theory, which was developed by an American psychotherapist and educator, Donald Clifton, who became known and identified to be a good recipient of an award from the American Psychological Association in 2003 for his lifetime achievements and outstanding contributions as... "...the father of the strengths-based psychology and the grand-father of positive psychology" (Lincoln Journal Star, 2015). His many contributions and practice evolved from working with people in numerous disciplines: social work, counselling, positive psychology and therapy late in 1900s and early years of 2000, (Psychology Today, 2020).

Donald Clifton was born on the 5 February 1924, in Butte, Nebraska and attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and earned his degree in Mathematics (Pegg, 2019). Donald Clifton reported that it was for the best to help individuals identify their top talents as such talents could be subsequently developed into strengths if ever handled with enough care and persistence. Subsequently, in 1990 he was awarded the honorary doctorates in Humane Letters and Law in Education Psychology in the year 2001 from the University of Nebraska and Azusa Pacific University, respectively. Don got another promotion at the University of Nebraska where he became Professor of Educational Psychology and began his thoroughgoing research.

Furthermore, Donald Clifton researched on what people did right to achieve top performance. He was dedicated in studying characteristics or qualities of great performers and pertaining to his discovery, he scrutinised the deficit model of development (Pegg, 2019). One of his biggest achievements was in 1999 where he designed an online assessment tool, which is called "Clifton Strengths Finder" that pivots 34 themes, which constitutes the user's personality. In 2001, he also made a

significant contribution to a book called; *Now: Discover Your Strengths with Marcus Buckingham*, offering advice on how to shape employees' strengths for the benefit of success at work. He was the Chief Executive Officer of Gallup's International Research and Education Centre and Archives Advisor of its World Leader Study. Donald Clifton died on 14 September 2003, aged 79 years (Pegg, 2019; PeoplePill, 2019).

3.2.2 Development of the individual in the strength-based theory

According to the State of Victoria (2012), the strength-based approach focuses on the rational of situations, in search of opportunities that will complement and support existing strengths and capacities, rather than focusing and staying with the quandary. In addition, strength-based approach is centred on complex mental operations and it does not only examine the individual, but also the individual's environment as well as limitations on individual's growth (Stoerkel, 2019). The restrictions can be when the individual has to deal with social, personal and/or cultural issues in an organisation but failing to do so due to the limiting conditions or measures (Stoerkel, 2019). This suggests that Deaf learners should be everybody's responsibility and they should be loved, cared for and supported. Again they should be encouraged to use and maintain their strengths to develop academically and become compatible members of the community.

Meanwhile, the strength-based approach is employed to assist the stakeholders namely: parents, family, family-community, classroom-community, school-community, and local community, in working together to support Deaf learners in their educations and developments, as well as appreciate and value Deaf education. This might create a positive impact on Deaf learners through the stakeholders' collaboration, in order to enhance their academic performance and ease the school dropout rate, as well as enable them to identify and address their challenges. Thus, adopting the strength-based perspective will help in mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners by striving to meet their teaching and learning needs and improve their academic performance for their betterment. This will ultimately affect the entire social structure and reinforce

productive communities through stakeholders' collaboration towards the development of their realised and unrealised strengths (McCamey & Payne, 2015).

3.2.3 Elements of the strength-based approach

3.2.3.1 *The individual (person)*

The individual or person is an important element in interconnection of every society or community. This is illustrated in the spheres of interactive influence and social networking adapted from Zacarian, Alvarez-Ortiz, and Haynes (2017). In this study, through experience, the individual represented a Deaf learner coming from a home or a family and a community going to school where he or she faces some challenges leading him or her to dropout. In the person's environment, he or she interacts with other people, such as: parents, siblings, peers, neighbours and teachers, and is in need of their support for his or her academic and personal goals and achievements. According to Zacarian et al. (2017), each person should set own techniques and contingencies to participate in interaction and understand his environment and how to prosper in it. Thus, the child should be viewed as unique individual capable to bring change as he or she possesses adorable resources and strengths to add value in life (McCamey & Payne, 2015).

3.2.3.2 *Parents*

This refers to the mother and father or the guardian of the Deaf learners, in regard to this study, who are very close to them and knows their strengths and weaknesses, but is expected to focus on their strengths without spotlighting deficiencies as to create thriving people (Peters, 2015). The parents or guardians are regarded as main teachers in the entire life of a child and should therefore be available to support their children, acknowledge the things they can achieve through strength they possess (Jach et al., 2018).

The parent-child relationship is built on a special bond that fosters the holistic growth and development of a child. The healthy parental involvement in children's daily life helps ensure that their little ones develop socially and academically (Khan, 2018 and Tasner, 2019). This clearly reveals that Deaf learners' parents should accept the fact that their child is deaf. This will allow them to be available and assist their children to accept the condition and enable their capacity to emerge and become a unique person. Kalpana (2020) concurs with the above view and indicates that well secured parent-child relationship portray a child with high self-esteem

3.2.3.3 Family

"Family" entails married man and woman with their children. Grandparents can also be part of the family especially in cases where they stay or live with the family. Blessing, (2020), states that late in 1950s, the ideal family incorporated of a father, a mother and children. Current, family definition reflects inclusiveness as it is said to be a close-knit unit of individuals joined together without dissimilarity to race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, generation, or any other differences (Temblador, 2015). Another explanation shows that a family can have about three parents with children born to one or both parents, or adopted (Brown, 2020). However, in this study context, family consists of parents, siblings, relatives and other people, including friends who are close to someone, showing him or her love and support. In this case we refer to parents, siblings, relatives and friends of our Deaf learners who are there to show them love, care, appreciation and support.

In the spheres of interactive influence and social networking, we have an individual or learner, who comes from a loving family wishing him best in education and life. His family believes in the value of education and providing the learner or an individual with rich opportunities: autonomy, empowerment, prosperous and happy life.

3.2.3.4 Family-community

Family and community engagement means that stakeholders: parents or caregivers, school staff, out of school time providers and community members should collaborate to create opportunities to improve the learning, development, and health of youth (CDC, 2019). Family-community engagement benefits to students are improved grades and scores, good behaviour, and better social skills. Brown (2020) also emphasises that the Community is also going to benefits from this engagement as it will be relieved from supporting large groups of people as families will play their part in developing their members who will then make positive contributions to the community as well.

Generally, spheres of interactive influence and social networking indicate that family-community represents its cultural, language, racial, and economic experiences (Zacarian et al., 2017). These interactions are good in enhancing children's understanding of their world, regulations and their cultural morals (Zacarian et al., 2017). In this case, the learner will develop and fully understand his world and life practices through support from both their families and communities.

3.2.3.5 Classroom-community

A community is vital in creating a successful classroom. Learners Edge (2016) emphasises that a teacher should plan, prepare, and implement procedures and expectations in the learner's priority. In spheres of interactive influence and social networking, it was reported that teachers have important role in stimulating conversation with stakeholders in education: students, families, colleagues, supervisors, and many others to ensure that students are at good space to access education (Zacarian et al., 2017). Thus, all stakeholders should believe in students' inner strengths and identify these strengths. As a matter of fact, educators should assist students to achieve their expectations and reinforce their inner strengths and abilities. This will enable learners to change their mind-set and become positive in every activity they are engaged to. Zacarian et al. (2017) postulate that educators require a comparatively long time to identify students' strengths, thereafter acknowledge and develop these strengths in

order to ensure that students become aware of what they possess. Educators should also create didactic programme that heightens social ties and networks speculating from students' strengths.

3.2.3.6 School-community

The school-community concept extends beyond neighbourhood or area that the school is delegated and situated to serve. The broader idea is that when a school serves as the hub of the community, parental involvement is highly considered (Jarnot, 2020). Zacarian et al. (2017) explain that major aspects of good educator is support of all students to cogitate their strengths and capacities; to evolve their skills, competencies and confidence to be active learners; independent and critical thinkers; and indispensable members of their community. In the spheres of interactive influence and social networking, the learner while growing up, experiences numerous challenges that do not hinder his school work, but grant him various opportunities like speaking two languages fluently, such as Spanish and English, while acting as the parent's interpreter in different occasions (Zacarian et al., 2017). This indicates that learner's experiences are appreciated by his school community namely; peers, teachers and specialist-teachers, principals, and other Para-professionals.

3.2.3.7 Local-community

According Cobigo, Martin, and Mcheimech (2016), a community is a group of people collaborating and supporting each other, bound by shared experiences, characteristics, sense of belonging, and mostly by their physical propinquity. Webster (2020) also defines a community as a one united body of individuals with common characteristics or interested in living together within a particular area. The spheres of interactive influence and social networking illustrate that families are knowledgeable and skilful to maintain well-being: their work and home life. Seemingly, the knowledge and skills embedded on them are passed and cultivated in the hearts of their children (Zacarian et al., 2017). That is where the learner and his family are seen randomly going out to cultivate the

fruits of togetherness and positively affect those around them. Moreover, as the individual or learner begins to grow, the world also grows and opens opportunities to include him and his society. Through acquired knowledge and skills from life practices and experience, children become valuable assets to their homes, schools, communities and the world at large (Zacarian et al., 2017). Figure 3.1 below reveals or illustrates the interactions that take place in a developing child.



Figure 3.1: The strengths-based approach (adapted from Zacarian et al., 2017)

3.3 VARIOUS STUDIES TO WHICH THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY HAS BEEN APPLIED

The strength-based theory has been used in various fields such as leadership, counselling, community and social work, paediatrics, education, medicine and many more. For example, Zwart et al. (2015) employed the strength-based approach to

explore teacher professional development where results of their study revealed that cherishing others potential could be a promising step towards re-creating progression in learning environment. In Indonesia, Ghofar et al. (2018) used this theory to explore teacher personality competency and found that one's positive personality is influenced by within and outside factors, simply indicating that there are good characters and bad characters in every person. While Jach et al. (2018), in their account tested how strength-based parenting and teenager's strengths jointly influence relationships. Their findings reflected that parent-student link assist adolescents to achieve higher grades through determination.

Furthermore, the study by Peters (2015) adopted the strength-based approach for holistic development of children and concluded that leading with strengths is important as the key is to identify a student's strengths and model their abilities and forget about frustrations we impose on them. On the other hand, McCamey and Payne (2015) employed the strength-based approach to explore the benefits of working with African-American Youth in Poverty and their findings indicated that the provision of a more positive strength-based approach to understanding this population and addressing social and behaviour issues, will work to alleviate the negative perception of this group. Pattoni (2012) also used the strength-based approach to investigate working with individuals and providing an overview of the research evidence, by illustrative examples emphasising that a strength-based approach is about different concepts, structures and relationships that we build in our support services.

MacArthur, Rawana, and Brownlee (2011) also employed the strength-based approach to explore its benefits in the practice of child and youth care and found that this model is good for building child's strengths in different terrains. The study by Warburton and Bredin (2019) advocated for the use of this approach to investigate ways of promoting ones' health, wellness and strengths for self-empowerment and self-determination. The Victoria Government (2018) also used a detailed embedded strength-based approach in exploring client conversations. Flacks and Boynton-Jarret (2018) also used the theory to explore strategies to circumvent unplanned outcome when screening for health-related social needs and listed their recommendations. Swartz (2017) also adopted the

strength-based approach to care and found it suitable as it incorporate patients and family members as true partners in care. Stuart (2016) also focused on the strength-based approach and actually found it suitable when working with groups.

3.4 APPLICATION OF THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY IN THE STUDY

As the study aims to explore how SSN could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in a selected high school in Leribe District in Lesotho, strength-based theory has been identified as the most relevant theory employed to guide this study and it also aligned with the SSN as both focusing on improving the learners' academic performances and outcome. Apparently this theory requires the collaboration of all stakeholders within the supportive school environment and the teachers' acceptance of a proactive moral responsibility, as well as community partnership, in solving issues pertaining to Deaf learners. Thus, Deaf learners should be seen as everybody's responsibility, which includes the families, school, community, government and anyone who wish to make a difference in Deaf education.

Moreover, the strength-based theory will be appropriate for this study, as it will help to raise the awareness of issues experienced by Deaf learners among different stakeholders within Deaf education. In addition, this theory is most suitable for this study as it will enable the various SSN to understand, collaborate, interact and influence Deaf learners in a positive way, as well as to support them to improve their academic performances and become compatible community members.

In the aspect of parents and family, Zitzman (2020) argues that family is meant to provide for the children's needs and offer guidance. Therefore, in context of this study, the theory will be used to explore how the Deaf learners' families are expected to provide support, encouragement, guidance, resources and offer solutions to the issues experienced by them, as well as identify ways in which they could mitigated their school dropout and enhance their academic performances. Meanwhile, the parents and families of Deaf learners in Lesotho are also expected to be passionate and more supportive in their children's learning and developments, in order to assist them to thrive

and become compatible community members. Meanwhile, the theory believes that family-community incorporation enhances students' academic performance as stakeholders normally share their lives experiences and perspectives, enriching the learners' knowledge of their families and communities - thus supporting the development of their identities (Galaviz, 2011). However, the family as a community will also be involved in the development of the Deaf learners by offering their support in their school activities, becoming resource persons and role models for the Deaf learners, and equally foster their stay and performances holistically.

In addition, local businesses might also invest in the Deaf learners' education and create job opportunities where they can explore, develop skills and knowledge to help them become compatible participates in their communities.

On the other hand, learners (Deaf and Hearing) - through this theory - would be encouraged by their parents, guardians and teachers to value the importance of education and take full responsibility of their academic work. They should respect their peers, no matter what they can or cannot achieve. They should share experiences in educational activities and encourage one another. Moreover, the teachers are required to communicate and partner with parents in understanding the learners' strengths and how they can use and develop their strengths for their own good. Systematically, parental involvement is quite helpful, for its influence is a predictor of a learner's academic achievements (Science Daily, 2019). Hence, developing a good relationship between the parents and teachers could make things better as there is a strong likelihood to share information on how to aid the Deaf learners to perform well within and beyond the school community.

More importantly, the strength-based approach indicates that the local community members can become resource persons, role models and could also invest in education in order to prepare young people for a better society to support themselves and thrive (Douglas & Murray, 2018). In other words, the local community can also create community services for the benefit of students and families in their surroundings (Anderson, 2019). This implies that if the local community wants its children to learn and thrive, they all have to join hands to support them using their strengths and potentials.

This suggests that Deaf learners should be welcomed and supported by their local communities in order for them to grow, develop and utilise their realised and unrealised strengths and potentials in a view to perform academically and socially well, as well as become compatible national assets (Jach et al., 2018). Therefore, based on the above views, the strength-based approach, which was chosen by the researcher, provides the most suitable theory for exploring and deriving a deeper understanding of how SSN can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in some selected Lesotho schools by striving to meet their needs and improve their academic performances. In essence, McCamey and Payne (2015) state that this will ultimately affect the entire social structure and reinforce productive communities through stakeholders' collaboration towards the development of their realised and unrealised strengths.

3.5 MERITS OF THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY

McCamey and Payne (2015) with the Victoria Government (2018) stipulate that the strength-based theory is one of the numerous theories that strive for alleviating problems to meet the needs of the totality of the person in the situation. In other words, this theory regards people as unique beings who do possess strengths, capacity and inner resources to make the world a better place to live (McCamey & Payne, 2015). In addition, this theory also creates bridges and allows for collaboration and openness to learn about challenges, how to survive and overcome them (McCamey & Payne, 2015). Zwart et al. (2015) point out that the essence of this theory is to help learners and teachers identify their core qualities through support, inspiration and collaboration. Subsequently, Zhang (2014) supports the above view and notes that the value of this approach is to enable Para-professionals to develop a caring relationship with clients - encourages, trust, show them unconditional love, and have a sense of compassion. The Para-professionals as well as all within clients reach should do as requested because this theory encourages the connection of a person's social support like family or community to spur on his or her own transformation (Stoerkel, 2019).

A considerable body of literature by authors, like Pattoni (2012), Jach et al. (2018), as well as Duan and Bu (2019), demonstrates that the strength-based theory is significant,

due to its ability to enhance the individual's psychological well-being, happiness, life satisfaction; as well as to reduce depression, anxiety, and stress. Strength-based theory develops hope and trust as well as motivates good performance. However, the research by Peters (2015) reveals that this theory is used when learning problems are diagnosed and focuses on the strengths without spotlighting deficiencies, also working towards creating flexible environments that will enable all to develop and thrive. Stuart (2016) concurs with Peters and asserts that main focus should be on one's strengths, abilities and potential rather than their problems, deficits and pathologies.

Similarly, this approach is seen as a theory that encourages people's experiences and enables group members to be successful. Therefore, working as a group in this theory could open opportunities for all to be successful. This theory is valuable, because it offers a set of techniques to facilitate the change process in meeting each person's unique needs (Stuart, 2016 and Zhang, 2014). Collaboration is seen as an important element or variable in this theory and it is between clients, carers and staff and also creates opportunities for success (Victoria Government, 2018). Brook (2018) also claims that the activities of this approach encourage partnership as to develop strong culture within the society.

Nevertheless, strength-based approach also allows people to identify and develop their strengths as to achieve their goals, and retain their independence (Pulla, 2017). Therefore, Baron, Stanly, Colomina and Pereira (2019) argue that working from the strength-based position requires strong support system and services as to help others in utilising all the strengths and resources they possess. This implies that collaboration is needed to ensure that people empowered (Baron et al., 2019).

3.6 DEMERITS OF THE STRENGTH-BASED THEORY

As the coin that has two sides, in the same manner, the strength-based theory has got its own limitations, as revealed by various researchers. According to Stuart (2016), a major criticism of the strength-based practice is to eliminate with bias. As a result, we

still have to mend gaps recognised in strength-based practice and attend broader issues that impact on individuals, families and communities (Stuart, 2016).

Jones (2017) reports that the two problems with the strength-based approach were; first: unmonitored weaknesses can eventually hinder one's effectiveness and even affect the career; second: this approach is centred on capability than personality. Stoerkel (2020) Brook (2018) highlights that one of the big mistakes made when bringing strength-based approach is to ignore people's weaknesses and other malfunctions. Zhang (2014) also notes that the strength-based perspective does not consider totality of social structure towards any achievement but focuses of those at reach, which is very harmful.

Despite the weaknesses raised above, concerning the strength-based theory, this approach still has more advantages than the disadvantages, as it is still useful in numerous studies. Therefore, this approach was selected aligning with support networks in promoting, supporting and enhancing Deaf learners' education through better academic performances and helping in mitigating their challenges in their schools and communities, in particular the problem of school dropout. These SSN need to work together/collaboratively in order to cater for the Deaf learners to guide the present study, as it will enable the researcher to raise the awareness of all the school needs and mostly support them and view them as special people capable to bring change in various ways that will result in harmonious life.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presents the theoretical framework adopted to guide this study, which is the strength-based theory of Donald Clifton (2004). This theory was used to understand and explore how SSN can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Furthermore, this theory provided a picture of the need for collaboration among the SSN and providing support to Deaf learners and mitigating the challenges experienced by them. The next chapter will present the research design and methodology adopted for this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher outlined and discussed the theoretical framework which underpinned the study in the previous chapter. The chapter here elaborates more on adopted design and methodology. It starts by describing underlying paradigm, approach and research style chosen for the study. This is followed by outlining the research sampling, data generation methods and processes. Furthermore, issues of validity and trustworthiness, data analysis and ethical issues of the study are discussed.

The chapter ends with a brief summary.

4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This consists of methods and techniques selected by researcher as to enable her to concentrate on suitable research methods for the subject matter and set up their studies for success (QuestionPro, 2021). According to McCombes (2019), research design is a framework that structures and shapes the study as well as to answer research questions.

Participatory design was opted for this study as it aligns with qualitative research and because it is a full involvement of innovative participants who can identify and solve their challenges (Participate, 2021). Participatory approach means involving stakeholders, particularly the participants in a programme (Guijt, 2014). This says that the participants (Deaf learners) are to partake in data generation as they are quite knowledgeable about challenges they face at school, and for that matter, they can come up with better suggestions concerning measures to be taken to remedy these challenges in a view to enhance performance and further their studies to higher institutions in great numbers to become compatible community members.

The study was based on this design's key strength, as it enables realistic expectations to form and lowers resistance to change by opening dialogue between various stakeholders, also renewing a sense of belief that every individual has something positive to contribute and that everyone can be collaborators, not just consumers (Participate, 2021). This design allows participants to pause and re-think, re-structure new strategies for better situations (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). It is also because the participants have needs and experiences that must be considered when making decisions that can affect them and through dialogue and collective action they can learn skills they need to improve their situation (Participatory Research, 2020).

4.2.1 Research paradigm

Paradigm is a Greek word, which means pattern. It constitutes the abstract belief and principles that shape researcher's perspective about the world and its processes (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). This study was guided by a transformative paradigm, an appropriate research response to understanding, explaining and intervening for transformation (Cram & Mertens, 2015), because of its characteristics towards the utilization of participatory research, also as it seeks change and improve the social justice (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Transformative paradigm is basically a suitable response to understanding, explaining and intervening for transformation (Cram & Mertens, 2015), for the key strength of this study was proposing for a shift from the common practice to adapt the new one. In Lesotho, LSENS are accommodated in schools, but they fail to access quality education, because of various challenges they face at school daily, as their individual needs are not fully catered for, in a view to enhance their accommodation. Currently, the fact of the matter is that they are enrolled in large numbers, but many cannot tolerate the prevailing challenges they face at schools, and opt for dropping out. As a result, only a few of them manage to get to Grade 12 and advance to higher education institutions for completion of their studies.

4.2.2 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative approach is for exploring and understanding how other people regard something as social or human problem (Creswell, 2014). According to Hammarberg, Kirkman and deLacey (2016), qualitative methods are employed to find solutions in relation to participants' questions, experiences, meaning and perspective. Qualitative approach was therefore utilised in this study when exploring how SSN could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in a selected high school in Leribe District in Lesotho. This approach allowed researcher-participants interaction where the researcher investigated meanings that Deaf learners attribute to their family, school and community experiences and how they affect their academic performance and life in general (Crossman, 2020).

Qualitative approach was selected for this study because it wants participants (Deaf learners) to raise their views about the topic discussed and to teach the researcher about their lives. Furthermore, this approach benefit the researcher to gain an insider's view and to find issues that are overlooked (McLeod, 2019). In this case, qualitative approach is suitable for this study as it describes experiences of Deaf learners at school where they are taught together with their hearing counterparts and having them as main participants with regard to their experiences on the dropout phenomenon. They discussed challenges they face at school, which lead to continuous school dropout and probably stated how these problems might be solved as to mitigate school dropout. The approach is perceived flexible and undertaken in a natural setting, and is an approach to understand a central phenomenon from the participants' point of view (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

4.2.3 Case study

This study's research design was done in the form of a single case study of a high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho. According to McLeod (2019), case studies are extensive explorations of an individual, group of people, event or community. Baskarada (2014) argues that case studies are suitable for immense description or cases as to

examine the complex social phenomena in-depth. Moreover, qualitative studies and single case studies complement one another (Creswell, 2013).

The single case study was the most preferable design for this study, because the researcher only wanted to study one single thing within one single group (Gustafsson, 2017). In this study, one single thing was to mitigate school dropout within one single group of Deaf learners in a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho whereby the participants aired their views on the challenges faced by Deaf learners, how these lead to school dropout, and how school dropout can be mitigated through school support networks (SSN). Case studies may require fewer resources and can be performed in settings and with a population that do not allow for large numbers of participants. Similarly, Willis (2014) states that single case studies can provide empirically-rich analysis of specific phenomena.

4.2.4 Study area

4.2.4.1 A brief review of Leribe District

Leribe is one of the ten districts of Lesotho, and is found in the north eastern part of the country and covers the area of about 2.828 square kilometres. It has its capital town called Hlotse, which is just situated along the banks of Hlotse River, which the town of this District-Hlotse - is named after, about 19.5km from the second biggest post between Lesotho and South Africa – Ficksburg border post above the Orange Free State along the Mohokare (Caledon) River. Leribe is a good place to access quality education, because there are several primary schools, high schools, colleges and vocational schools accommodating learners from different places. Living in an urbanized area, the community of this area has somehow adapted its lifestyle. A major part of the community works at government sectors, some at private sectors and few are self-employed. It is challenged by unemployment, alcohol, drug and substance abuse, as well as crime. There are sports and recreation places, as well as community radio station. Community health is based on the health services offered by the government hospital, other private clinics and pharmacies.

4.2.4.2 The selected school profile

The selected high school is among the high schools in Leribe District and was selected for this study to be carried out on the virtue of being a sole inclusive high school, accommodating Deaf learners and their hearing counterparts simultaneously in the entire country at the moment. The school is under the Roman Catholic proprietor and was established in 1979 with only four female teachers and 140 students.

Basically it started admitting Deaf learners around the 1990's where the first Deaf student was a girl doing Form A (grade 8) in 1994. Since 2012, the number of Deaf learners admitted in this school have increased at an alarming rate and currently in 2020, amongst the total school roll of almost 500 students, there are 82 Deaf learners in all grades, whereby Grade 8 has 25 Deaf learners, 38 in Grade 9, 13 in Grade 10, five in Grade 11 and one in Grade 12. The school has 31 qualified teaching staff members, including eight sign language interpreters, as well as nine supporting staff.

4.2.5 Research sampling

William (2020) argues that sampling is the process of selecting certain individuals from a targeted group who will be studied and their results being generalised to be from the inter group. This is a technique of selecting representative part of population, main aim being to discover characteristics of the total population (McLeod, 2019 and Webster, 2018). Sampling procedure refers to the plan of action, which states from whom and from where research data are to be generated (Silverman, 2010). According to Shantikumar (2018), sampling is a method that enables researchers to gather information about a population, based on results from selected representatives. There are multi-qualitative sampling techniques: convenience sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, random sampling, quota sampling and many more (Elmusharaf, 2012). Similarly, McCombes (2019) adds that there are several methods of a population sampling namely; simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, clustered sampling, purposive sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling.

Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan & Hoagwood, (2013), assert that purposive sampling is a technique often used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich participants for constructive use of resources. According to Creswell (2013), purposive sampling is characterized by deliberate targeting of respondents. It is also said to involve selecting the sample of individuals who own an in-depth knowledge about the issues that are being studied through their own experiences with that issue under study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). Hence, purposive sampling was employed by this study for selection of participants. In this case, Deaf learners partook in data generation as they were quite knowledgeable about the challenges they face at school. These Deaf learners are able to come up with better suggestions concerning measures to be taken to remedy these challenges they experience in a view to enhance performance and further their studies to higher institutions in great numbers and become compatible community members by mitigating of school dropout through SSN.

4.2.6 Selection of participants

The study comprised of nine participants as this is a qualitative study, which according to Creswell (2013), uses a small sample, while also aligning with the selected data generation method for this study. The Deaf learners making up the sample, aged 18 and above, were from the four categories of deafness; Born deafness, Pre-lingual deafness, Post-lingual deafness and Hard-of-hearing. They are appropriate participants mainly as information rich persons known to provide rich information for the topic that is under exploration, and also because they are experiencing challenges, which lead to school dropout and are expected to have typical characteristics for the chosen sample (Creswell 2014). This small sample of nine participants allowed easy participation and interaction of the participants and enabled the researcher to deeply engage with the participants and make sense of the information given. Within this group of nine participants, there were three small groups adding to the breadth and depth of information as they are recommended for best practices. In these three small groups we had representatives of the four categories of deafness. This was to open for variation in reasoning skills as their abilities may vary. Hence, there will be more information gained

from their discussions. The selection was done by the sign language interpreter working hand-in-hand with the researcher, through their experiences and being knowledgeable about which categories the participants fall under.

4.3 DATA GENERATING METHODS

The process of generating data is supreme for the quality of qualitative research (Goldkuhl, 2019) and helps to development researcher's understanding in relation to participants' perspectives and experiences on the phenomena (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The study therefore, used two data collection tools - the devices or instruments used to collect or generate data, as to cultivate compelling evidence and construct acceptable answers to posted questions (Formplus, 2019), namely focus groups and collages. It was during these sessions where the participants (Deaf learners) whose voices are not heard, and who are therefore being marginalized, indicated challenges faced by Deaf learners at school; ways they thought would be used or taken to help them become better achievers and stay at school through various networks.

4.3.1 Focus group discussions (FGDs)

4.3.1.1 *What is a focus group discussion?*

A focus group discussion is an in-depth criterion that assemble small equivalent group to discuss issued topics (Kabir, 2016). A focus group is simply a group discussion whereby participants are asked to share their opinions and perceptions of a set topic in a group, speaking out in their own words and allowing interaction among the participants (Delpont & Fouche, 2011; Farnsworth, 2016). According to Goldkuhl (2019), a focus group study refers to a group session where knowledgeable individuals get together and discuss some given themes. Focus groups are also defined as a great way to learn about users' preferences through group dialogue where six to ten individuals will have an open discussion through sharing of ideas (Formplus, 2019).

4.3.1.2 Suitability of FGDs

FGDs are a data collection method conducted through semi-structured group interviews, in a relaxed atmosphere to enable participants to state their views and concerns freely. The researcher, therefore found FGDs suitable for this study as the research participants shared a common characteristic of deafness that define them as members of a target subgroup (Kabir, 2016). It is also because, through the use of a focus group, the findings become valuable as generated data (Goldkuhl, 2019). The purpose of a focus group in this study was to help the researcher obtain in-depth information through direct interaction with the participants. Hence, social interaction during a focus group encourages informants to express more opinions based on concepts, perceptions and ideas of the group. A focus group was selected, also because the discussions were held in a familiar environment to the participants, being at their school. It will therefore, help the participants to engage fully in the session through open-ended questions, to reflect, argue and provide rich and in-depth information about their experiences that challenges Deaf learners face at school, which lead to their dropout, how these challenges could be rectified through various networks as to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho. On the other hand, there will be an opportunity for the researcher to probe for clear answers, get in-depth information and explore using responses from the participants during focus group interaction.

4.3.1.3 Data generation process with focus group discussion

The researcher informed the participants about her interest in working with them as co participants for her research study. Researcher verbally stated the aim of the research to selected individuals which is; 'to explore how school support networks could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in a selected high school in Leribe District in Lesotho'. The researcher assured the participants that rules and regulations for this research would be highly considered - their participation was voluntary and that the research would be confidential and private as their identification would be anonymous. They were informed that the focus group session would take 1 hour and 30 minutes of their time. The participants were also notified that they were free to withdraw

from the study at any time and at any stage. Both the Sign language interpreter and the participants would then be issued detailed consent forms or letters explaining everything about the research for them to sign as an agreement for their participation. After ensuring that the participants consented using the information consent letter; the researcher would then go further to generate data for the study, using focus group discussions.

4.3.2 Collages

4.3.2.1 *What is a collage?*

According to Francis (2020) and Leavy (2019), word “collage” originates from the French verb ‘*coller*’ meaning ‘to disseminate’. Francis (2020) further asserts that, collage is the artistic process of disseminating and assembling various materials to a flat surface and can be done by cutting and pasting on the final art work. Collage is an artistic composition of various materials, such as papers or found objects like drawings and pictures cut from magazines, glued on a surface also known as a visual representation made from an assembly of different materials creating a new whole, involving making connections, considering relationships and constructing new ideas (Brutler-Kisber & Poldma, 2010; Mitchell, Naydessane & Moletsane, 2017; Webster, 2020). Collage can be made entirely of found objects, or it can be a combination of objects and the artists’ own drawing (Nordquist, 2019).

4.3.2.2 *Suitability of collage*

Collage was selected for this study through its strengths: providing an opportunity for inclusion of marginalized voices and encouraging a range of linguistic and non-linguistic representations to express their lived experiences, as well as to showcase innovative ways for participating in a dialogue, and how they develop and dissemination knowledge (Gerstenblatt, 2013). Collage requires less academic training and is widely usable with a variety of population. Collage portraits validate the participants’

experiences and will represent the findings, using both words and images to provide the participants with ways of displaying delicate issues or information that is difficult to express with words. Collage has been approved as effective data generation strategy with children. Hence, making collage of pictures thus became appropriate way for children to convey their moods, feelings and ideas (Mayaba & Wood, 2015), meaning the participants will engage in a collage to represent their feelings and views.

4.3.2.3 Data generation process with collage

The researcher once again met with participants in the presence of the Sign language interpreter at a convenient place where the research was conducted for the second session of data generation where the researcher introduced participants to a collage activity before inviting them to make their collages related to the research focus. The participants were notified that similarly collage sessions will also take 1 hour 30 minutes of their time. They were asked to form small groups for the collage activity where collage materials were distributed. Participants were then asked to create collages showing things that needed to be done to improve the existing SSN for Deaf learners in Lesotho. The researcher then gave instructions to the participating groups about sharing of collages made as she went further to generate data for the study during the collage session.

4.3.3 Triangulation

This is the use of multiple methods of data sources especially in qualitative research to create clear understanding of phenomenon (Carter, BryantLukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014). Kulkarni (2013) states that “triangulation” means use of numerous methods to generate data on the same topic. Roulston (2018) indicates that this approach helps to assess the validity and reliability of data gathering methods because it involves crosschecking of information and collection procedures to ensure validity and impartiality (Mustaffa, 2014; Blog, 2020).

In this study triangulation was done through the use of two data generation methods, namely focus group discussions and collage. Field notes were also taken to develop data and provide rich situational for analysis (Creswell, 2013). Field notes as evidence helped to compare and link the data generated from these two methods as to get similar results. Video recording, which helped in capturing non-verbal cues, was helpful through its ability to capture interaction of the participants with the researcher during data generation sessions for provision of richer knowledge.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

It is defined as a procedure of cleaning, transforming, and modelling data to discover valuable information for decision-making (Guru99, 2021). Data for this study were analysed qualitatively through thematic analysis as a process of identifying patterns or themes (Eloff & Swart, 2018). Nowell, Norris, White and Moules (2017) and Caulfield (2019) describe thematic analysis as an appropriate method to dispense skills for analysing qualitative data. The researcher therefore, went for thematic analysis, because it provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified, providing a rich and detailed account of data that can produce trustworthy and insightful finding (Nowell et al., 2017). The detailed steps of thematic analysis according to Caulfield (2019) and Nowell et al., (2017), are familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, naming themes, as well as writing it up.

4.5 VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The researcher met with the participants prior to the actual sessions of data generation where they were engaged in pre-testing of the data generation methods; focus group discussions and collages to predetermine challenges that might occur during the actual data generation process as to maintain validity, trustworthiness and credibility of the study. Reflected challenges were then rectified to enlighten the problems during the actual data generation sessions. For that matter, to maintain trustworthiness, the participants were firstly informed about video-recording before being recorded. There

was a stimulus, which is something that rouses or incites to activity (Webster, 2020) in a form of body exercise as to break the ice, to evoke a reaction and make the research scenario more engaging and interactive for participants before data generation resumes.

During data generation process, the participants expressed their views using non-linguistic representations to share information or knowledge concerning their understanding and experiences, mainly on SSN available at their school and how they could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho. There were also a video recording of the sessions, as to acquire all necessary information used for the study and to strengthen credibility of data, as the researcher might have missed details while trying to take down notes during the respondents' responses. Video-recording again helps in keeping participants' original words. The researcher managed data and immersed herself in it, in order to make good decisions on the findings through coding (Koshy, Koshy & Waterman, 2010).

Triangulation as another way of promoting or assuring the validity whereby research is done from multiple perspectives applying variety of methods to collect data is done to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon (Kulkarni, 2013). Triangulation helps to establish credibility and contributes to trustworthiness (Devault, 2019). As a result, in this study the use of two methods of data generation was employed: FGDs and collage, which was a technique that would inform the results from different angles.

4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethics being social, religious and civil code of behaviour, especially that of a particular group, profession or individual as explained by Webster (2018), were taken into consideration, as it is the researcher's responsibility. The researcher therefore, considered different ethical permission, such as asking permission through application from Ethics Review Committee as required, to proceed with research. The researcher also applied for permission of data generation in Lesotho through District Senior Education Officer of Leribe, the principal and HOD of the selected high school where

the research was conducted before conducting this research study. Permission was also obtained from the participants and the sign language interpreter who works directly with the participants daily to convey messages. The aim of the research was explained to the authorities, participants and the interpreter.

Furthermore, the participants were made aware of their rights to participate, namely voluntary participation and withdrawal at any stage of the research. They were then issued consent forms, which they signed before the study was conducted as a sign of agreement of their participation. The researcher assured the participants that the research will be confidential and anonymous. They were informed about confidentiality and that researcher may only disclose confidential information accurately and honestly to the members of the Ethics Committee, when necessary. In addition, the participants were reminded of the use of a video recorder which was meant only to record the session, because not to miss anyone's comments. The transcribed materials, video and field notes would only be used for the research purposes and thereafter they would be securely locked away for safety. They would be destroyed after five years. Finally, the researcher ensured that the study will be beneficial and transparent to the participants and promised them an access to the studies' outcome.

4.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology conducted in this research study where the paradigm, approach, research style chosen for the study, as well as research sampling were stated with specific reasons for their selection. Furthermore, data generating methods and processes with their triangulation were discussed. Issues of validity and trustworthiness of the generated data were considered together with the method of data analysis aligning with qualitative study. Finally, ethical issues were highly considered and discussed. The next chapter focuses on the analysis and discussion of the data generated from the study.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines data analysis and findings discussion from data generated through two methods: focus group discussion and collage. The data are presented using themes revealed from research. Furthermore, verbatim extracts of the research participants have been added in presenting the data. Existing literature with theoretical framework are also infused into the discussion of the findings.

5.2 PRESENTATION OF MAJOR THEMES

This section presents the main themes and their subordinate-themes emerging after analysing data. Major themes are therefore, used as headings to present data in this chapter.

- **THEME ONE:** Deaf learners' comprehension of SSN;
- **THEME TWO:** The available SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners;
- **THEME THREE:** Diverse ways employed by the SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners; and
- **THEME FOUR:** Multifaceted factors that inhibit SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

The major themes, as well as their sub-themes, are presented in Figure 5.1 below.

<p>THEME ONE: DEAF LEARNERS' COMPREHENSION OF SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS</p> <p>Sub-theme 1: Internal support networks (School support networks within the school, such as peers, teachers, interpreters and school resources).</p> <p>Sub-theme 2: External support networks (School support networks from outside the school, such as the parents, loved ones or family members, community, stakeholders, NGOss and significant others).</p>
<p>THEME TWO: THE AVAILABLE SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS TO MITIGATE SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS</p> <p>Sub-theme 1: Human resources (Within and outside the school – peers, interpreters, teachers, principal and administration. Outside the school – parents/guardians, community, support groups and many more)</p> <p>Sub-theme 2: Non-human resources (classrooms, books – text books and note books, computer room, library, resource room, playgrounds and many more).</p>
<p>THEME THREE: DIVERSE WAYS EMPLOYED BY THE SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS TO MITIGATE SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS</p> <p>Sub-theme 1: Provide academic support</p> <p>Sub-theme 2: Offer emotional and psychological support</p> <p>Sub-theme 3: Give moral and social support</p>
<p>THEME FOUR: MULTIFACETED FACTORS THAT INHIBITS SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS TO MITIGATE SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS.</p> <p>Sub-theme 1: Teachers' attitudes</p> <p>Sub-theme 2: Lack of rapport and support from their peers</p> <p>Sub-theme 3: Lack of Sign language skills</p> <p>Sub-theme 4: Lack of parental involvement</p> <p>Sub-theme 5: Inadequate resources</p> <p>Sub-theme 6: Discrimination</p> <p>Sub-theme 7: Lack of sexual health education</p>

Figure 5.1: An outline of the themes and sub-themes identified in the study

5.3 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

During data analysis, four major themes emerged and were used as headings to present data in this chapter. The themes were categorized based on the research questions. Furthermore, verbatim quotations were used in data presentation. These themes are discussed in-depth below.

5.3.1 Theme One: Deaf learners' comprehension of school support networks

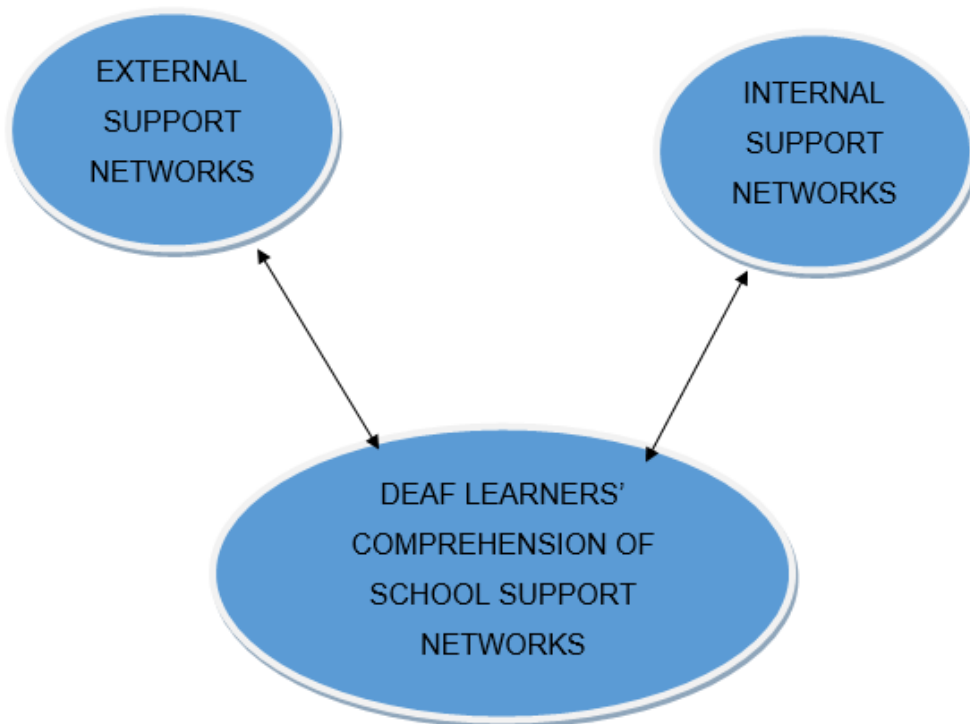


Figure 5.2: Deaf learners' understanding of school support networks

In order to find what the participants at a selected high school in the Leribe District understood and perceived as SSN, the researcher asked a general question: “What is your understanding of the term school support networks?” It is in this theme where the research participants, in their discussions and responses to this question revealed their understanding of SSN as any help or support received from or offered by people within

or outside the school to them (Deaf learners). Therefore, two subthemes, namely the support networks within the school (internal support networks) and those from outside the school (external support networks), were identified and are discussed below.

5.3.1.1 Internal support networks

When exploring the participants' understanding of the SSN available for them, the data that emerged from their responses revealed that all the people within their school, especially those working with Deaf learners on daily basis were always available to help them in their studies and for them (Deaf learners) to stay at school and not to dropout. The following are the excerpts from the data showing the participants' understanding of SSN:

Learner 8 mentioned:

“School support networks are the kinds of support or help given at by teachers or school principal in order for us to learn”.

Learner 4 also said that:

“School support networks are the different ways that people in school uses to help and support us in our learning and studies at school”.

In addition, Learner 9 also mentioned that:

“School support networks are about giving or getting help at school for our study”.

One of the participants (Learner 1) also stressed and elaborated that SSN are the roles played by different people within the school, in order to help and support their learning and development. This is captured in the following excerpts below:

“School support networks can be other people who help the learners at school, like their fellow Hearing learners, teachers and interpreters helping Deaf learners to learn in our school, as some are good in Sign language and interpret for Deaf learners”.

Drawing from the responses above, the findings from the data have revealed that Deaf learners' understanding of SSN are embedded in the support and help received by Deaf learners within their school. The findings also revealed that the Deaf learners receive internal support and help from different networks or people, such as parents, guardians, families, teachers, peers, interpreters, school principal and administration, community, support groups, as well as NGOs. teachers and school principal, school interpreters and administrators employed by the school, in order for them to learn easily and develop holistically. In addition, the data also depict that the internal support networks offered more of learning and moral support to the Deaf learners so that they could achieve their learning goals. For instance, one of the participants (Learner 5) indicated that:

“Teachers’ supports are internal for them to learn new things”.

Therefore, the finding resonates with the studies of *The Glossary of Education Reform* (2013) and Capella University (2016), which indicate that SSN are embedded in the support and help received within the school. ET2020 Working Group Schools (2017) and University at Buffalo (2021) agree that learners should receive internal support and help from different networks or people, such as their fellow colleagues, teachers, school principal and administrators employed by the school, in order for them to learn easily and develop holistically. The study conducted by the University of Washington (2019) also reveals that support networks are people in your life that help you achieve your personal and professional goals, such as family, teachers, peers, friends and mentors. Polakow's (2012) study also revealed that SSN could be one of the best support systems where some professionals, in particular - provide emotional and practical help to one in vulnerable predicament. This implies that SSN are one of the most important innovations that boost achievement and graduation rates and bring quality to scale (Ark, 2017). The finding of this study also resonates with the European Commission (2018), which affirms that in multiplex education systems, networks are seem as an appropriate approach for best decision making and responsibility sharing. It enhances educators' professional development, enable innovations to evolve more quickly and solve serious problems. It also advocates for effective use of time and resources as well as capacity building in schools,

The above quotations highlighted the internal support networks available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. What the participants are stating is correct, because the findings are supported in the strength-based theory, indicated by Learners Edge (2016) and Zacarian et al. (2017), where they stipulate the pivotal role of the educator in fostering with their associates, administrators and other stakeholders to ensure that they work in relation to their learners' needs.

5.3.1.2 External support networks

Another theme that emerged from the participants' responses regarding their understanding of SSN was regarded as the support they received from outside the school. This kind of support could also be seen as external support networks. Meanwhile, the data identified support networks from the parents, guardians, community where the school is located, from some Non-Government and Government agencies/organisations and other different people and groups of people from outside the school community. These external support network, according to the participants, always offer some kind of help or support to them, which are in the form of providing material and financial supports, which is needed by the Deaf learners and school, for example school uniforms, paying of fees, hearing aids, foods and provision, books etc.

The following comments were made by the participants below:

Learner 2 commented that:

“School support networks mean how people from outside can help students at school by providing us with books, clothes, hearing aids and others”.

Learner 3 concurred that:

“School support networks could be any support from people from outside our school to the learners, e.g. Sisters of Charity support some learners with fees and uniform”.

Learner 7 also stated that:

“We can say school support networks are people from the community and outside like NGOs who work together with the school to help students with what they need, such as books, uniform, fees and other things needed at school for them to survive and do well in their studies”.

Drawing from the responses in the quotations above, the findings revealed that Deaf learners have a good understanding of what SSN means. The findings from the data revealed the school support network gotten from people and agencies outside the school, being external support. The participants noted that this external support identified as people from the community, non-government agencies, for example the Sisters of Charity support and other different people and groups of people provide and offer some kind of help or support to them in the form of material and financial supports like school uniforms, payment of school fees, hearing aids, provisions and foods and as well as reading materials. The findings are found consistent with the studies of O’Keefe (2011), Zille (2016) and Hughes and Carter (2017), which stipulate that external support sometimes collaborate with the school to ensure that learners’ needs are met as learners should have plenty of chances to practice new skills, achieve more in school, stay in school longer, and enjoy the learning experience more.

Moreover, the quotations discussed the value of the external support networks towards mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners. The relevance of these findings to the current study is supported by Jach et al. (2018), Khan (2018), and Tasner (2019) who regard parents or guardians as prime educators in every child’s life and value healthy parental involvement to enhance better social and academic performance. The findings are also supported by CDC (2019) and Jarnot (2020), as they indicate the importance of community engagement in children and adolescents as to increase opportunities for them to improve their learning, development and health.

Nevertheless, the findings from this theme has identified not only the definitions and understandings of Deaf learners’ perceptions of SSN, but other elements, such as the kind of support given to the learners at school and those responsible for supporting them was also taken into account. Consequently the two themes that emerged from this study showed that indeed the Deaf learners have a good understanding of what school

support network means, as they identified them as support derived from within the school (internal support), such as teachers, principal, school administrators, interpreters, counsellors and mentors and the support derived from outside the school (external support), which are from parents, families, NGOs, community, and people outside the community.

The findings of this study were also supported by Webster (2020) who values community as a unit of certain individuals characterised with similar related social beliefs, interests and goals deeply interwoven in their daily lives. In this study, fellow hearing peers, teachers principal, interpreters, administrators, parents or guardians, non-government and government agencies, all as a community became support networks to the Deaf learners. Drawing from the strengths-based approach adapted from Zacarian et al. (2017), parents, family, family-community, classroom-community, school-community and local-community form a part in either internal or external support networks. Thus, showing the importance of social interactions is needed in developing a child as for one to develop a sense of belonging, perform well and become productive member of the community.

5.3.2 Theme Two: The available school support networks to mitigate school dropout among deaf learners

The school as a focus of analysis in this research is based on a fact that most of Deaf learners spend most of their time there. Theme one has revealed the learners' understanding of the SSN within and outside the school. These support networks can be derived from their parents, families, teachers, principal, school staffs, hearing peers, friends, NGOs, community and other stakeholders. In this second theme the school support network was explored further when the participants were asked to state the SSN perceived to be available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners The collage construction process was the dominant approach that brought into fore the various SSN available to mitigate school dropout rate, and this process included pictures, writings and explanation of the photographs during the focus group discussion. Theme two identifies the various resources, such as human and non-human resources

and presents how they mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Figure 5.3 below presents the resources available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

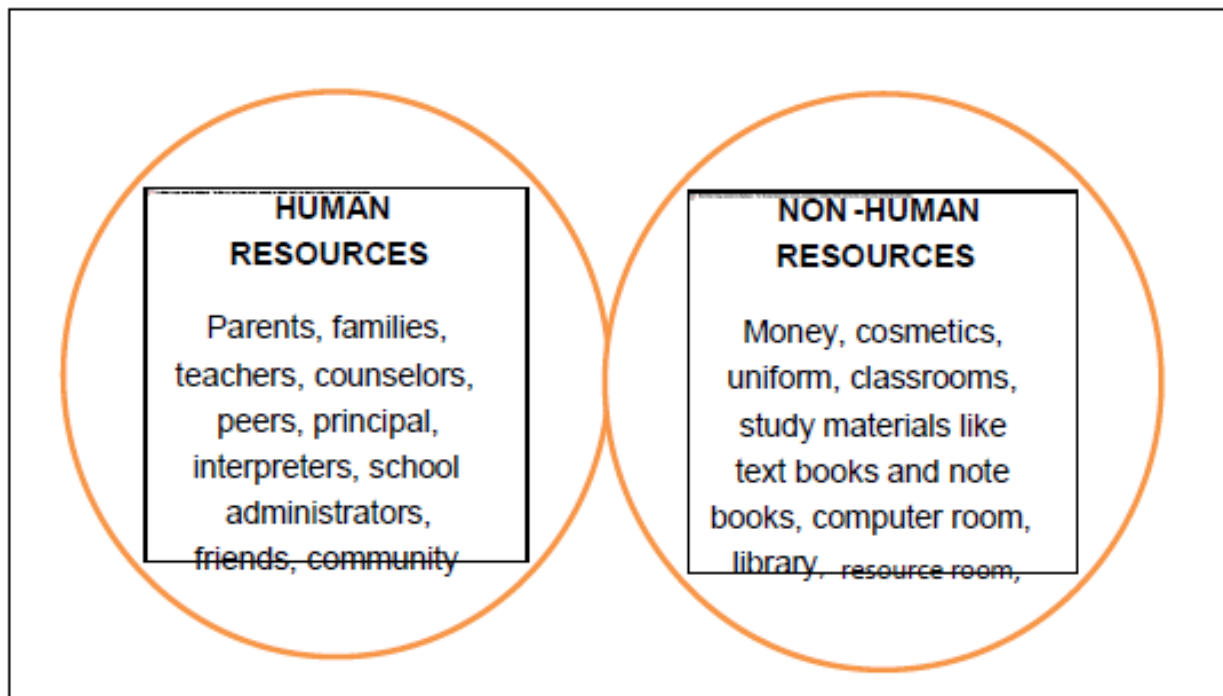


Figure 5.3: Resource charts of Deaf learners derived from FGDs

The analysis of the participants' resources showed two major themes such as human resources and non-human resources. Each of these themes will be explained and discussed in detail in the following section.

5.3.2.1 Human resources

The discussion in this section presents the diverse human support network that enabled the Deaf learners to achieve their goals in life and was identified by this research participants, whose illustrations of the human resources are identified as parents, guardians, families, teachers, peers, interpreters, school principal and administration, community, support groups, as well as NGOs. These human resources can be found within and outside the school. Meanwhile, according to the participants, human

resources (their parents, guardians, peers, teachers, interpreters, principal and school administrators as well as their friends) are seen as resourceful, because they provide academic, moral, emotional and psychological support to Deaf learners. The following quotes were highlighted by the participants, showing how the humans within and outside their schools are resourceful:

“Our hearing friends and peers in our school are our best school support networks. They are always available to support and help us” (Learner 4).

Learner 7 also indicated that:

“Our teachers are our best school support networks. They are always available to support, care and help us in our studies”.

The participants also noted the way their principal helps them, which is amazing as they identified that she always encourages them, supports, cares and motivates them in their academic work. This is revealed in the case of Learner 2 when discussing the support networks available to help them.

“Our principal is our best school support networks. She always support, cares and loves us so much. Anytime we need her help, she is always available to help us”.

Most of the participating Deaf learners also ascribed their achievement regarding their personal goals and development to the support they get from their parents and guardians, community and the NGOs, such as the Sisters of Charity and the Catholic Reverend Fathers. The participants see their parents and community to be a resource that encourages them not to drop out of school as they indicated them to be helpful and supportive financially and material wise. This is evidenced in the following quotations below.

Learner 5 noted:

“Parents and families also pay school fees and pay for educational tours”.

Learner 8 in support attested that:

“Our parents and guardians help us with food, clothing, fees, books, cosmetics and many other things needed at school”.

Meanwhile, some of the participants also mentioned that people from the community and NGOs provided them with moral, financial, spiritual and material support, as shown in the following quotations:

“Prince Mohato support group comes from Maseru to Leribe to help us Deaf learners at our school by giving us best strategies to use in our learning experience such study skills, leadership skills and learner care and support programs” (Learner 7).

Learner 2 commented:

“I love Sisters of Charity and Catholic Bishop (Leribe) so much because they love Deaf learners”.

“Sentebale is supporting Deaf and hearing learners a lot with different things like food, school uniform and hearing aids” (Learner, 9).

In support of this Learner 8 and 3 clearly stipulated that the help and support they get from the diverse NGOs support them in achieving their educational goals:

“Sekha-Metsi also gives support towards our education”.

“The social development ministry is helping some of the Deaf learners so that they will not drop out from school” (Learner, 3).

When asked on how the identified human resources (school support networks) could be improved to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in their school, the participants unanimously suggested that some things within the school need to be enhanced, which is because of the challenges they are still experiencing in school and they reveal that the available human resources are not adequate enough to provide solutions to their issues. Therefore, Figure 5.4 below in the collage depicts how to enhance the existing diverse human resources available for Deaf learners.

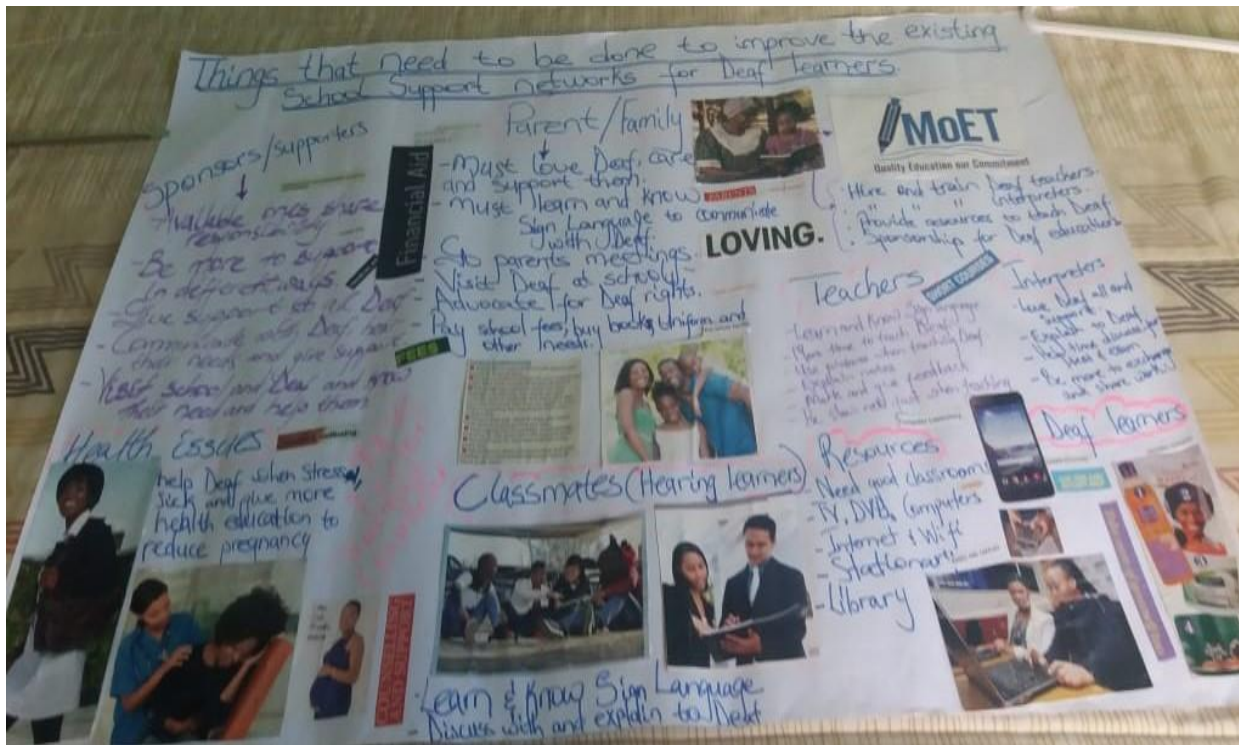


Figure 5.4: The collage depicting the human and non-human resources to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners

As Learner 4 commented:

“Trained teachers are needed to use appropriate methods and resources which are Deaf friendly as well as more trained interpreters to assist in developing Deaf learners into better people through education”.

Learner 7 also indicated:

“The available school support networks should not be selective when supporting and helping, but cater for all Deaf learners for them to love school, perform well until they finish school and get good jobs in future”.

Some of the participants in the study also suggested that including the Deaf learners in the decision-making process will enable their needs to be met, as well as make people (school support networks) aware of their challenges.

Just as Learner 9 illustrated:

“I think it is correct for Deaf learners to be included in decision making for the support networks to be aware of what kind of people Deaf learners are and be aware that interpreting is lot of work that needs more interpreters”.

Learner 1 also added:

“Deaf learners can also be included in the government decision making on Deaf education through their representatives”.

The responses revealed that the participants viewed their parents, guardians, peers, friends, teachers, interpreters, principal and school administrators as resourceful because they provided academic, financial, social, emotional, moral, material and psychological support to them as Deaf learners. The Deaf learners also suggested the need to be included in the decision-making process on issues concerning them, for the SSN will be made aware of their challenges. Meanwhile, the finding of this study corroborated with the findings from Rosenfeld, Richman and Bowen (2000), as well as the European Commission (2018) study, which identified the groups of interconnected people, such as the family, the peer groups, the school and the community, as key support providers in partnership towards predicting and enhancing positive outcomes for Deaf learners. Furthermore, the European Commission (2018) argues that in multiplex education systems, networks are seem as effective and efficient approach in various ways: to support horizontal decision making, share responsibilities, enhance the professional development of teachers, optimize time and resources use, support capacity building in learners, enable innovations to evolve more quickly and solve complex problems.

Creswell (2014) suggests that various role-players and stakeholders, such as learners, teachers, interpreters, school management committees, parents and community need to collaborate harmoniously, in order to assuage the issue of school dropout among Deaf learners using SSN to focus on their skills, strengths, abilities and potentials as people who are able to define and recognise their own issues, as well as make informed decisions on their own. Borup (2016) contends that peers are capable of

influencing each other in learning process by modelling correct behaviour and developing student learning through psychological and physical tools. In addition, Martin and Collie (2018) also indicate that teachers working with Deaf learners need to develop positive attitudes for building good learner-teacher relationships, as this will help them work easily with these learners whose enjoyment level in learning will be increased and participated more in class. Drawing from existing literature, Sign language interpreters play a major role in Deaf education, as they are responsible for helping Deaf individuals to understand what is being taught. They need to develop appropriate skills to work with Deaf learners: research, listening, memory and Sign language skills (Sign Language Interpreter, 2019).

Furthermore, it is revealed that parents are expected and required to be supportive in their children's learning and studies. The view above is supported by LIEP (2018), who reports that parental involvement should be well encouraged in schools and parents should be encouraged to have positive attitudes in educating their children, especially those with disabilities. Rosen (2016) also points out that involving the community will help the school to multiply its effects by continuing education, creating greater awareness, enthusiasm and other opportunities. The findings showed how the participants identified the different people (human) within and outside their school as resourceful in mitigating school dropout. These human resources were seen very helpful to their learning and provided emotional, moral, financial, academic and social support to them. The roles played by the human resources are broad in the sense that they support the Deaf learners' learning skills, educational goals and holistic development. Strength-based approach entails the idea of promoting awareness of cognitive, emotional and motivational aspect, developing autonomy and giving support in enacting qualities and inspiration in practice. Thus, the strength-based approach will involve the entire social structure and reinforce productive communities (McCamey & Payne, 2015). However, the next section discusses the non-human resources available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

5.3.2.2 Availability of non-human resources

Additionally, the common elements disclosed by all the participants were the availability of diverse non-human resources provided for the Deaf learners to enhance their learning, as well as mitigate their school dropout. These resources were being used for diverse purposes and are identified as money (fees), cosmetics, uniforms, classrooms, books (text books and note books), computer rooms, a library , a resource room, playground and the sports field as discussed in the following excerpts from the participants.

Learner 5 noted:

“...the Ministry of Social Development is responsible for placement of some of Deaf learners at this school and it pays school fees and offers transport to some learners when schools open and close so that they come to school or go home during school holidays”.

Learner 4 mentioned:

“...the Ministry of Social Development is also helping some of the Deaf learners in their responsibility with financial grants received after every three months”.

Learner 7 affirmed:

“Sentebale also helps with fees and transportation and provisions like cosmetics”.

“Sentebale and Sisters of Charity help girls with sanitary pads and girls are happy at school” (Learner, 3).

The participants were asked to elaborate more on the type of non-human resources that are found helpful and supportive to their learning and development. Some of them also mentioned learning materials like textbooks, notebooks, and school uniforms, which made learning easy for them.

As Learner 4 indicated:

“...Yes, Sentebale also helps with uniform and this makes us not feel excluded from the rest of our peers”.

Learner 7 also noted:

“Sentebale also helps us with books like textbooks and note books. You see this makes learning easy for us here as some of us cannot provide these learning materials”.

Some learners also expressed that the provisions of good and quality classrooms, computer centres, WIFI connections and a resource room, as well as playground were helpful and supportive to their holistic development and achieving academic goals. Erbas (2017) asserts that the use of appropriate resources like material resources, for example the visual and technical support materials will enable learners' participation in the classroom discourse and for instructions whenever working with Deaf learners so that they can easily understand during the teaching and learning process and these are crucial in helping them to improve in their academic work.

“...the classrooms, library, computer room, and resource room provided for us in this school are helping us Deaf learners with our school work where we learn more and Sekha-metsi is also helping to ensure we have WIFI connection” (Learner 6).

“ the help and support we get from the Sisters of Charity and the Catholic Bishop of Leribe support ,makes the learning space for us Deaf learners become more accommodating as we do not feel excluded or isolated” (Learner, 4).

Learner 9 also stated:

“At our school there are playgrounds and sport field provided for us enabling us to play games, interact and have fun with our friends”.

The study revealed from the participants' responses above that they were able to identify resources in the form of learning materials, learning space, and technology that enhanced and supported their learning, as well as helped to mitigate the school dropout ratio among them. Most of their discussion showed that helping and supporting them

through monetary means (bursary and paying their fees), provision of school uniforms, creating a conducive learning space or classrooms, provision of books (text books and note books), computer rooms, a library, a resource room, playground and the sports field, enhanced their learning and also enabled them to grow and develop academically and holistically. The findings resonate with the study of Ark (2017), which found that SSN are one of the most important innovations that boost achievement and graduation rates and bring quality to scale. ABC Assignment Help (2021) affirms that special learning resources are admirable in meeting one's learning needs as they are designed mainly to support teaching and learning in different context. Hence their effective usage helps the students to construct more than superficial knowledge that is building in-depth knowledge on a particular subject and developing individual learning strategies, values, attitudes and generic skills. Akungu (2014) and Ministry of Education Guyana (2016) explain that non-human resources, including teaching materials and physical facilities are needed in order to raise the quality of education, its efficiency and productivity, as they can significantly increase students' achievement by supporting student learning. Therefore, provision of non-human resources acts as SSN and is seen as the most important innovation that exists and could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners so as to improve their academic achievement and for them to be able to graduate and become transformers of their society, as well as good members of their communities.

In the study, the findings in theme two showed diverse and complex resources that matter to the Deaf learners' learning and how they mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. This illustrates the complex interaction that takes place between the various resources (human and non-human materials) and the Deaf learners in their learning environment, which enabled them to develop holistically and academically. In addition, the findings were supported by the study of McCamey and Payne (2015) with Victoria Government (2018), who stipulated that the strength-based theory is one of the numerous theories that strive for alleviating problems to meet the needs of the totality of the person in the situation.

A closer examination of the findings of the study revealed that although much has been done, provided and made available to support Deaf learners in their quest for knowledge and independence, however, from the participants' responses these resources are not sufficient. Lynch (2016) explains that the purposeful administration of resources to develop equitable access to quality learning opportunities is a major component of education policy at all sectors. Hence, this implies that more SSN are still needed, in order to mitigate the rate of school dropout among Deaf learners and this requires all individuals and stakeholders to be fully involved and responsible in the promotion of Deaf education, as revealed by the strength-based approach (Zacarian et al., 2017). The relevance of these findings to the present study is supported by Zwart et al. (2015) who values strength-based theory in its essence of making learners and teachers realise their core qualities developed by inspiration through support and collaboration. Stoerkel (2019) also supports the findings when indicating that the strength-based theory encourages connections for social support. Thus all stakeholders have to play the roles to spur learners' educational transformation.

5.3.3 Theme Three: Diverse ways employed by the school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners

This theme presents the findings from the research question for the study, which looks at how the identified SSN could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Meanwhile, the data for this study were mainly generated through the focus group discussion and collage construction process and it brought into focus how the identified SSN, namely internal support and external support, according to the participants could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at the particular selected high school. However, the data generation process included writing of captions and accompanying explanations with examples during focus group discussions, as well as using pictures, drawings and their own words or brief notes during collage constructions. This theme also demonstrates the diverse ways and roles played by the identified SSN, and how they could be used and improved to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school. Hence, the researcher

categorised these diverse ways as: providing academic support; offering of emotional and psychological support and lastly giving social support. Thus the findings from the study highlights the importance of collaboration of various stakeholders in love, care and support of Deaf learners, as well as by encouraging them to use and develop their inner abilities to do well academically and become compatible members of the community (McCamey & Payne, 2015). Therefore, the diverse ways employed by the identified SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners are grouped into three as discussed in the following section:

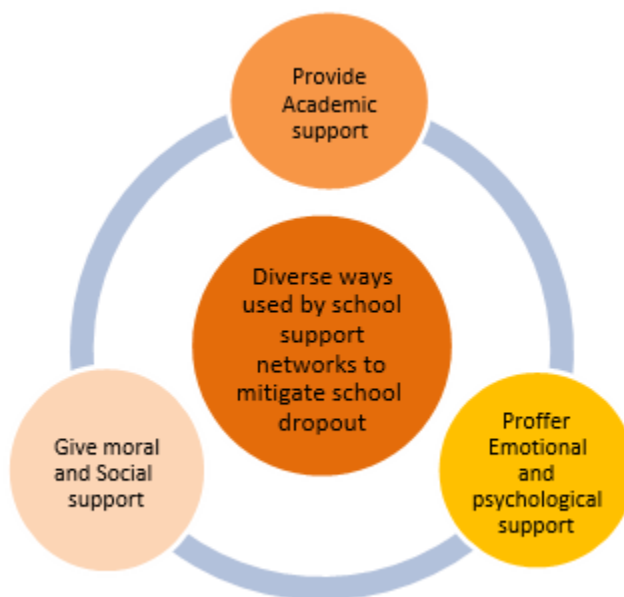


Figure 5.5: The diverse ways employed by the identified school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners

5.3.3.1 Provide academic support

When talking about the diverse ways in which the SSN, identified by the Deaf learners could mitigate the issue of school dropout among them, the participants spoke about the provision of academic support. The learners also ascribed their personal growth and development towards the support they get from their teachers, peers, school administrators, principal and interpreters that helped them in achieving their academic goals. Meanwhile, the participants regarded the people in their school as a resource

that they could draw their strength from towards their learning experiences and they implied that they are helpful and supportive to their academic achievements. This is evidenced in Learner 7's assertion when explaining how helpful the internal school support network has been to them:

"Teachers should find better ways of teaching and helping Deaf learners to understand what is taught because this will help us achieve our learning goals".

"Deaf learners should be given more time to study, e.g. if Deaf learners fail, they should be supported and given second chance to repeat class with full paid sponsorship".

"Some Hearing learners and teachers, principal and interpreters know Sign language and communicate with us and also interpret for us, which makes it easy for us to understand and learn better" (Learner, 4).

Learner 5 also noted:

"...going on educational tours has been helpful in making me grow academically and I really enjoy class activities when the interpreter is present at school".

Some of the participants also revealed how their internal support networks, for example their hearing peers, teachers, interpreters, principal and school administrators provided academic support to them, which enabled them to grow academically and to achieve their academic goals. According to the participants:

"The support from my Hearing peers, teachers, interpreters and principal has really helped me to be where I am and also to reach my goals in academic"
(Learner, 6)

"...the encouragement and care that I received from all the people in this school has help me to grow in my learning" (Learner 1)

The findings showed the type of internal support received by the Deaf learners to enhance their academic goals. Therefore, it is suggested that the Hearing peers, teachers, interpreters, as well as the school principal and administrators need to provide adequate support towards Deaf learners to improve and become productive.

Meanwhile, the findings is in line with LIEP (2018) who reports that learners (Deaf and Hearing) should be encouraged by their teachers to value the importance of education and take full responsibility for their academic work.

Jones (2020) indicates that a Sign language interpreter helps to build a family and a sense of belonging to Deaf - building a foundation and awareness of the Deaf community in future. National Deaf Center (2018) stated the role of the classroom Sign language interpreter being to convey the spirit and content of the communication in the classroom. Weber (2016) also affirms that interpreter is important in learning experiences of Deaf learners and emphasises on the benefits of a good learner-teacher relationship for its benefits - promoting academic success, helping to develop self-worth and professional growth, which are for all stakeholders (Locus Assignments, 2012; Dietrich, Zimmermann & Hofman, 2020). The research overwhelmingly suggests that students of varied ages, experiences and backgrounds, who perceive their teachers to be caring, listening, understanding and supportive of their needs and interests are better able and willing to engage in classroom activities, for strong teacher-student relationships which indicate both short and long term effects. These effects are strengthening of academic achievement, reduced absenteeism, promotion of self-motivation, strengthening of self-regulation, improvement of goal-making skills and lower school dropout rates as students are more socially connected at school than their peers (Saul, 2015; Sparks, 2019; Waterford, 2019; Wanders, 2020).

This is in line with the strength-based approach which indicates that the local community members can become resource persons, role models and could also invest in education, in order to prepare young people for a better society. The findings also resonate with the study of Zacarian et al. (2017) who state aspects of school-community as motivating all students to identify their strengths and capacities. Thus, learners should have ambition to develop their skills, competencies and confidence to be active learners - independent and critical thinkers and precious members of their learning and local community.

5.3.3.2 Give moral and social support

According to the participants the available SSN are valuable to them, because they grant and offer emotional and psychological support to Deaf learners. They indicated through the use of SSN they have a sense of belonging, and learning is enjoyable, fun, joyful and they are happy. The following quotes were highlighted by the participants on how the SSN are offering emotional and psychological support to them.

Learner 2 noted:

“The care and support giving to us by our friends (Hearing learners), shows how much they love us and this makes us feel more relaxed and acceptable”.

“When I am depressed and feel like giving up in my studies, my parents, friends, and teachers always encourage me” (Learner 3).

Learner 4 mentioned:

“Our principal and teachers, interpreters and Hearing friends are our best school support as they are always available to help, encourage and motivate us”

“We need a nurse, doctor, counsellor and therapist, or maybe one of them who should help Deaf with counselling sessions to reduce the stress and anxiety and the challenges we face at school, provide medicine to those who are sick, and guide those who are pregnant so that all Deaf learners can attend school, study and not stay home” (Learner, 9).

The emotional and psychological support offered by their SSN, namely their parents, families, teachers, Hearing peers, the school principal and interpreters, as well as friends, were in resources from where the Deaf learners draw their learning goals. As they interact and communicate with different people who encourage, motivate and mentor them, they develop a sense of belonging and find learning enjoyable, fun and interesting. Drawing from the strength-based theory, the Deaf learners should be viewed as individuals who possess the inner abilities and strengths with capability to bring change in their lives. Literature posits that a strong support system has the potential of developing a sense of belonging and improved self-esteem, reduces stress

and improves overall health and wellbeing and can reduce the feelings of loneliness and mild feeling of despair and also increases overall physical health, making them feel better about their themselves (O'Shea, 2017).

However, the findings of this study contrasted with those of Verma (2015), who find that the reason some students fail repeatedly is due to the lack of emotional and psychological support, such as self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Katulkar (2018) concurs with the above findings that a large number of learners discontinue their education, due to lack of interest. Hence, in the findings of this study, the participants asserted that the emotional and psychological support provided or enabled them to develop their love to study and for school and they regarded school as a resourceful learning space for them to develop their learning skills through their academic practices and social interactions. Kalpana (2020) agrees with the above view and argues that a secured parent-child relationship helps a child to develop stress management strategies. A strong parent-child attachment leads to healthy social, emotional, cognitive, and motivational development. Borup (2016) also reveals that peers relationship positively affects learning process by modelling appropriate behaviour and elevates student academic performance using psychological and physical tools. In addition, interacting and communicating with other people in their learning environment through SL was helpful in improving their learning.

The research findings clearly revealed that Deaf learner developed self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and an interest and love for school and this positively impacted on their learning. In this aspect, the findings are supported by Zitzman (2020), who argues that family is meant to provide physical and emotional support - model good values, provide protection, advocate for the children's needs and offer guidance. Pattoni (2012), Jach, Sun, Loton, Chin, and Waters (2018), and Duan and Bu (2019) also value the strength-based theory, due to its ability to enhance the individual's psychological wellbeing, happiness, and life satisfaction. It also reduces depression, anxiety and stress, as it develops hope and trust in one's own thoughts and judgements, as well as to motivate students to be passionate in their academics.

5.3.3.3 Provide social support

According to all the participants, the provision of social support by people around them enhances personal and academic development. Participants also indicated that social support is having people like their friends and families around them, who they could turn to in their moments of need, as well as interact, communicate and share their views and information. Meanwhile, through social interaction, which is seen as an important aspect of life, the Deaf learners are able to maintain good communication, and receive help, respect, love, care and support from everyone in their environment in order to live in peace and unity as was shown in the following quotations:

“My class teacher phones my parents about things happening at school like meetings, my health and my needs and this concern for me has helped to promote my learning and health” (Learner, 1).

“Teachers should help us become good people through advice and guidance” (Learner, 5).

Learner 8 noted:

“...the interpreters should keep good relationships with Deaf learners. They should be passionate about their work, advice and encourage us to work hard in our studies”.

Some learners also expressed that receiving social support enabled them to develop a sense of belonging, as they were able to fit in with their hearing peers and did not feel isolated or lonely again.

“....You seehhh.... I am now able to chat with my hearing friends, I don't feel depressed or feel like am alone again. I now feel I belong here” (Learner, 3).

“The way they play with us and assist us using Sign language makes me feel so good and welcome here and this makes me always want to participate in class” (Learner, 6).

The responses from the participants revealed the importance of providing social support for Deaf learners, which according to them helps to cope with stress and overcome

tough times and academic pressure. These findings corresponds with Khan (2018) and Tasner's (2019) study, which found that parental involvement is vital in Deaf learners' daily life as social support to enhance their wellbeing. Borup (2016) also reports that meaningful interactions are perfect to develop ideal skills: cognitive outcomes, promote creativity and many more. However, findings of the study concur with Borup's views, because the participants mentioned that they received help, advice, felt welcomed and appreciated by their peers, teachers, Hearing friends who were willing to learn SL and assisted them with interpreting in the absence of their interpreter. The participants also revealed that they developed a sense of belonging and fit in with their peer groups, which reduced stress and anxiety for them, as well as impacted on their participation in class and attendance at school.

Through rich responses of the participants, the findings certainly demonstrated the possibility of the various resources in playing significant roles in their learning and developing experiences, such as providing social support – this can be seen in the strength-based approach (Zacarian et al., 2017) where each person should avail him or herself to provide multiple opportunities to the Deaf learners in order for them to join social interactions as to understand the world and how in it survive in it.

5.3.4 Theme Four: multifaceted factors that inhibit school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners

In discussing the strategies employed by the SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in their school, much focus was also drawn towards the factors that could hinder the attempts made by the SSN in managing school dropout among Deaf learners at the selected high school. The participants highlighted several barriers, such as: poor teachers' attitudes towards Deaf learners, lack of support from fellow learners, lack of SL skills, poor or no parental involvement, limited resources, discrimination and the lack of sexual health education. These diverse factors mentioned above was seen as a hindrance to the Deaf learners' growth, development and learning and negatively affected them in achieving their learning and academic goals. They were also attributed to be the cause of school dropout among Deaf learners. What the participants stated

was true, because they are supported in the strength-based approach, indicated by Peters (2015) and Stuart (2016) when suggesting that this theory is used when learning problems are diagnosed and focuses on the strengths without spotlighting deficiencies, also working towards creating flexible and conducive environments where all can display their skills and implement them in the development of everyone around them. These different factors identified above also inhibited the identified SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Therefore, each of these factors will be discussed in depth in the following sections.



Figure 5.6: Multifaceted factors that inhibit school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners

5.3.4.1 Teachers' attitudes towards Deaf learners

The finding in this study revealed that most of the participants perceived the teachers' attitudes towards them (Deaf learners) as unfavourable, which impact negatively in their academic processes. Teachers' negative attitudes towards the Deaf learners can also cause poor teacher-learner relationship, was attributed to be one of the major causes of school dropout among Deaf learners by the participants. The following excerpts from some of the participants clarify this:

"...more trained interpreters and teachers need to be hired, those who can work well with Deaf learners unlike some of our teachers here, to help them understand and not dropout" (Learner 6).

"Some teachers are not good with Deaf learners in class" (Learner, 7).

Another participant in a similar way added:

"Teachers do not talk or discuss with us. They should do one-on-one meeting with Deaf learners to discuss class work or feedbacks; this will help us to learn" (Learner 4).

Learner 5 also added:

"Deaf learners should be given enough time, good learning materials and more trained interpreters not this ones that do not like to listen and communicate with us".

The findings from the responses above showed that teachers' attitudes towards Deaf learners were negative and hostile and was seen as a barrier that inhibited the use of SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Meanwhile, these findings resonated with Mkandawire, Maphale and Tseeke (2016) in their study, which found that teachers are not capacitated in terms of special skills required to teach learners with disabilities. As a result, they develop negative attitudes and believe teaching learners with special educational needs will slow them down. Therefore, this implies that the negative attitude by their teachers caused the learners to resort to dropout due to the poor attention for them, as well as being excluded during teaching and learning

(Mkandawire et al., 2016). Hence, an effort towards having positive a learner-teacher relationship is needed to help learners participate more in class, have more enjoyment in their learning, and make their aspirations grow. Aranda (2017) also found that the shortage of teachers who specialises in SL has an impact on learning process, as they pay little or no attention and support to Deaf learners.

5.3.4.2 Lack of rapport and support from their peers

The participants responses suggests that learning with their peers was discouraging and they highlighted that having a good relationship with their peers or fellow students is important because it promotes unity, respect and also help them support one another. In addition, the participants indicated that lack of support from their fellow learners affects their relationships and this causes them to fail academically, due to the feeling of isolation, loneliness, depression and rejection. The following statement by the participants explains this.

Learner 2:

“Some Deaf learners’ attitudes towards us, their fellow learner is bad, they treat us like we are nothing and this make some of us to quit school. I believe that we should work together”.

“All learners when they support each other, this will make them have respect, work together and support one another to achieve their learning goals and not drop out of school” (Learner, 9).

Whilst Learner 4 suggested that:

“Hearing learners should also love and help their Deaf learners with home-works and discussion for them to do well and stay at school too because this will help them not to feel alone, depressed and rejected”.

The data above showed that all the Deaf learners identified the importance of having a good relationship and support from their fellow learners (Deaf and Hearing learners). According to the participants, the lack of support from their fellow learners causes a lack

of self-confidence, academic failure, depression, stress, isolation and loneliness for them and this leads to school dropout among them. McLeod (2012) with Verma (2015) indicate that underachieving or poor academic performances are listed among the characteristics that best describe students with low self-esteem who have constant failure, because of no self confidence in them. In line with findings, study by Mnguni (2014) stress, depression and anxiety which led to school dropout among Deaf learners.

5.3.4.3 Lack of Sign Language skills

Most of the participants' responses revealed that they experienced challenges in learning due to their lack of skills in SL. This issue was identified as one of the barriers that affected Deaf learners at home and in their school and caused some of them to drop out of school. The finding also suggests that due to the lack of skills in SL, they were unable to communicate with their teachers and fellow learners. They requested the school to make available experienced and trained SL instructors during the teaching and learning process, which would help them enhance their learning and also mitigate them from dropping out of school. The following data from the participants' responses indicated the lack of skills in SL experienced by them:

Learner 3 stated:

“Communicating with Sign Language should be done by all to help Deaf learners feel free and access information easily but this is difficult here because most people cannot engage in Sign Language”.

Learner 6 also asserted:

“Many of the Deaf learners, as well as our teachers are not good in Sign Language and this affects when learning in the class because we cannot communicate with the teacher”.

Another participant affirmed that:

“...due to our lack of skill in Sign Language, we find it difficult to communicate with our fellow Deaf learners, our parents and other people giving support to us especially during the teaching and learning and this also makes learning very difficult for us”.

The participating students' responses depicts that they are not able to learn and communicate well in school, due to their lack of skills in SL. Meanwhile, SL is regarded as predominant means of communication for Deaf people. Ngobeni, Maimane and Rankhumise (2020) pose that Deaf children should be taught SL at tender age, to develop and sharpen their language skills and fine motor skills for future learning. However, they further argue that some Deaf learners are challenged to learn SL while they are under enormous pressure to cope with mastering the rest of the curriculum (Ngobeni et al., 2020). The findings corresponds with Aranda's (2017) study which find that shortage of teachers who specialise in SL have an impact on learning process, and causes them to pay little attention and support to Deaf learners. Therefore, the findings showed that learning and communicating is mainly through SL and due to the lack of it, this stands as academic barrier: there are no clear questions, effective discussions and clarifications on learning activities mostly in the absence of the interpreter.

5.3.4.4 Lack of parental involvement

Another common inhibiting factor towards mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners, as shared by all the participants in this study, was the poor or non-parental involvement for students to improve their learning and from their responses; it was evident that parental involvement is a challenge to the learning and development of Deaf learners and could also lead to school dropout. Some of the participants presented the following utterances:

“To me I will say that parents of Deaf learners do not care, love and support Deaf learners in their studies like they do to their hearing children and this affects their learning. I think our parents need to be more involved in our learning and show concern” (Learner, 3).

Another Learner inferred:

“Not all parents support their Deaf children; that is why Deaf learners suffer and dropout of school” (Learner 8).

Learner 1 noted:

“It would be good if all parents of Deaf learners do their responsibility and be involved in their children’s education for instance our parents should come for parents’ meeting”.

Some of the participants mentioned that they stay with their guardian as their parents are late and due to lack of parental involvement in their education, some of them had to drop out of school:

“My friend’s parents died, there is no money for school fees and now my friend is not coming to school” (Learner, 5).

The findings suggested that parental involvement in Deaf learners’ education is very important as it helps them to concentrate and focus on their academic goals. However, the findings revealed that the lack of parental involvement causes the learners to drop out of school. The findings are in contrast with the study by Jach et al., (2018) that found parents or guardians as paragon in every child’s life and should therefore be available to support their children, acknowledge the things they are capable in and encourage them to excel using their strengths. Similarly, the literature states the power of parental involvement in children’s life which maintains best performance in all activities the child engages in (Khan, 2018 & Tasner, 2019). This clearly reveals that Deaf learners’ parents have to accept a fact that their child is Deaf as to avail themselves to support to unique person. Kalpana (2020) also found that a child with a stable parent relationship become good at managing stress. This secured attachment between him and his parents result to better developments: social, emotional, cognitive, and motivational development. Science Daily (2019) in its report asserts that parental involvement and family influence are predictors of learner’s academic achievements.

5.3.4.5 Inadequate resources

The participants revealed inadequate resources as one of the factors that could inhibit SSN in mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners. These inadequate resources were categorised as the human, non-human and material resources, which are not sufficient to cater for all learners (Deaf and Hearing learners) to use during the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, much emphasis was made on limited availability of the material and human resources needed to enhance Deaf learners' learning, in order to mitigate their school dropout. The participants therefore spoke eloquently about the need for the school to create an enabling learning environment with a well-established teaching and learning infrastructure, visual and technical support materials, as well as employing trained and experienced interpreters, teachers and sign language experts. Some of the comments made by the participants were as follows:

Learner 5:

“Trained teachers are needed to use appropriate methods and resources which are Deaf friendly”.

Learner 8 also stated that:

“We need a better and more trained interpreters in class not one, to share the work with us during the teaching and learning process”.

Learner 2 also commented:

“Some support networks should be put in place for us here to help with free Internet and Wi-Fi to learn and improve our school work”.

Lastly, Learner 6 was also of the view that:

“Good classrooms for Deaf learners are needed with electricity to plug electric devices to support our learning”.

The data revealed that all the Deaf learners believe that their studies were negatively affected, because of the insufficient resources within and outside their learning environment. The findings contrast with Erbas's (2017) study that found that the use of

appropriate resources, such as material and human resources, for example visual and technical support materials, as well as trained and experienced teachers, sign language instructors and interpreter who at times are supplemented as teachers to facilitate Deaf learners' engagement and participation in the classroom discourse. However, in this study, the data revealed that adequate learning resources is vital and required to aid the learners with understanding the instructions during the teaching and learning process and also to help improve their learning. On the other hand, Gudyanga et al. (2014) and Weber (2016) in their study found that seating arrangement and proper classroom acoustics were a major concern when working with Deaf learners. This shows the need to understand the challenges experienced by Deaf learners and how to make provision for appropriate resources and support for them to access learning in schools. Mkandawire et al. (2016) contend that quality teacher education or training is what teachers need to acquire skills needed to handle the needs of all the children at school, especially those with disabilities, including Deaf learners.

5.3.4.6 Discrimination

As shown in Figure 5.4, under the collage, during the session for collage sharing, discussion and reflection, the participants identified the exclusionary practices by some of the SSN who to them are selective and ignorant when giving support, as well as negligence in performing their duties. The participants claimed that this issue impacted negatively on their learning and could inhibit SSN mitigation of school dropout among Deaf learners. The following utterances revealed the participants' views on the issue of discrimination.

Learner 4 indicated that:

“School support networks should work together and share responsibilities for them to support all Deaf without neglecting others”.

Learner 7 also indicated that all the SSN should collaborate and ensure that they include and not discriminate Deaf learners from their help, assistance, care and support.

“There should be different organizations to help all Deaf learners, which will share support ways and needs, and not discriminate anyone so that all Deaf learners attend school and not dropout”.

The findings from the verbatim quote above from the Deaf learners showed that the issue of discrimination experienced by the participants was due to the exclusionary practices, such as experiencing alienation from the SSN when giving support and help to the other Deaf learners without considering them. This factor affected and impacted on the Deaf learners’ learning, as they identified that the support networks were negligent in performing their duties. The findings are consistent with Brown’s (2015) study which found that children are discriminated at school in all stages of development. Connolly (2020) concurs with Brown and argues that discrimination is a serious problem that limits learners’ development and growth. He further stipulates that learners experiencing this problem are left out and denied the opportunity to develop friendships and experiment or explore new things (Connolly, 2020).

5.3.4.7 Lack of sexual health education

From the analysis of the collage, the findings revealed that the participants’ (Deaf learners) learning and development were negatively affected due to the lack of sexual and health education, which caused some of them ,mostly the female Deaf learners to engage in unsafe sex that resulted in unplanned and unwanted pregnancy. The study suggests for more sexual and health education programs for all the Deaf learners, in order to reduce the high rate of pregnancy among the female ones, which is one of the things that cause them to drop out of school. Meanwhile the following comments were made by the participants.

Learner 1:

“I think Deaf learners need more health education to reduce the high pregnancy rate”.

Another Learner who spoke passionately stressed that:

“We need a nurse, doctor, counsellor and therapist, or maybe one of them who should help and educate Deaf learners and help them with medicine when sick, stressed, and guide those who are pregnant so that all Deaf can attend school, study and not stay home” (Learner, 5).

The above responses reveal that the lack of sexual and health education results to an increase in unwanted pregnancy among Deaf learners, which then causes them to drop out from school. The Deaf learners' limited knowledge on sexual health education can be seen as challenging to their learning and development. These findings are consistent with Jones et al. (2018), who in their study found that evidence on the sexual experiences, access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) as well as information and service provision for adolescents with disabilities are limited. This implies that Deaf learners have very little knowledge of SRH issues and this is because of the lack of communication between them and their parents who lack skill in SL and do not discuss these issues with them, notwithstanding the fact that it is seen as a taboo. In support of this, Douglas and Murray (2018) with Birchall (2019), affirm that all these reflect the relationship between early marriage and school dropout, which restricts Deaf learners, especially the female ones in having the ability to access quality education as a result of issues related to child bearing and child care responsibilities, giving the evidence that pregnancy and early marriage are predictors of school dropout.

5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focuses on the data analysis and discussion of findings from data generated through two methods, namely; focus group discussions and collage construction. Data was presented through four major themes that emerged which were categorised based on research questions of the study. In addition, the verbatim quotations were infused to ensure that the views of the participants were included and not left out of the presentation. References to the relevant and current literature were utilised in the discussion of the findings. The next chapter summarises the recommendations and conclusion of the present study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Previous chapter presented data analysis and discussion of the findings of this study. This is the final chapter therefore, will provide the summary of the findings which responded to research questions and highlights the recommendations that emerged from the findings and the study in general. This chapter also highlights the recommendations for future research. Finally, the concluding remarks are also outlined by the researcher.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section consists of the research questions used in conducting this research;

- 1) What is the understanding of school support networks by Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho?
- 2) Which school support networks are perceived to be available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho?
- 3) How could the identified school support networks be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho?
- 4) What factors could inhibit the use of school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe District in Lesotho?

The responses given by participants at the selected high school produced complex views about the concept of SSN and how they could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Meanwhile, their responses were categorised into five themes, which are summarised below:

6.2.1 Theme One: Deaf learners' comprehension of school support networks

The findings in this theme revealed that Deaf learners possessed a good understanding of the term 'school support networks'. The researcher believed that the Deaf learners' understanding of SSN was clear, because the participants were able to state the kind of support given to them and listed diverse examples of people who offered them such support. From the definitions of SSN given by the participants, two categories of the SSN were derived from the data, namely internal support networks (support network from inside the school) and the external support networks (support networks from outside the school). According to the findings, the internal SSN are identified as their fellow peers, teachers, interpreters, principal and school administrators. These internal support networks helped the Deaf learners to learn and develop holistically, as well as achieve their learning goals. On the other hand, the study also revealed the external support networks that helped the learners in achieving their academic goals and they were identified as their: parents/guardians, community, volunteers, NGOs, various support groups and organizations. All the identified external SSN provided some kind of help and support, such as providing material and financial support to the Deaf learners. They are also to work collaboratively and share their knowledge and responsibilities to enhance the Deaf learners' personal growth and development and enhance their learning. The participants also reiterated that the SSN could be any help or support from people within or outside their school which might be in the form of academic, financial, material, moral, emotional and psychological support needed by the Deaf learners to perform well, achieve their academic goals, stay at school and never dropout and lastly to become better persons. However, the implication of the study was that not all of the Deaf learners at the selected high school knew about the available SSN.

6.2.2 Theme Two: School support networks available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners

The findings from this theme identified the various resources, namely the human resources and non-human resources available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. For the participants, the following human resources, such as their parents,

guardians, families, teachers, peers, interpreters, school principal and administration, community, support groups, as well as NGOs located within and outside the school, supported and helped them to overcome some of their challenges like stress, depression, low self-esteem, learning difficulties, loneliness and also made it possible for them to stay in school. In addition, the study also found that there were various non-human resources that were provided and made available in the participants' school to support and enhance their learning. These non-human resources were identified as the SSN and employed to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners and also enhance their learning. However, they were also categorised as material and technological resources, such as money (school fees), cosmetics, uniform, classrooms, books (text books and note books), computer rooms, a library, a resource room, playground and the sports field. According to the data, the participants indicated that these non-human resources enhanced and supported their learning and made learning fun, interesting and enjoyable for them. The findings in the study also showed the SSN as being the most influential elements in mitigating school dropout at the selected high school and through collaboration and sharing of responsibilities, Deaf learners life could be transformed into becoming better citizens of their society.

6.2.3 Theme Three: Diverse strategies employed by the school support networks to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners

The findings from the theme showed the different ways employed by the identified SSN to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at the selected high school. The Deaf learners identified diverse ways in which the identified SSN could mitigate school dropout amongst them and this were indicated as: providing academic support, proffering of emotional and psychological support and lastly giving social support. According to the participants, these diverse strategies mentioned will help in developing the participants holistically, as well as shape and enhance and enjoy their learning, as well as being able to perform well academically, and stay at school. The findings in the study showed that the participants received diverse support from the various SSN available within and outside their school and it provided them with academic, emotional

and psychological, as well as social support, which helped them to become independent learners. Meanwhile, through these various support offered by the support networks, the Deaf learners developed a sense of belonging as they felt accommodated at the selected high school, got academic sponsorship and bursaries to pay their school fees, were able to communicate with some of their teachers and Hearing learners who are passionate to learn SL for easy communication with them, have a good rapport with their fellow peers (Hearing learners) as their friends to play, have fun and do school activities with and having interpreters too convey messages between them and the Hearing people.

More importantly, the findings revealed the benefits of Deaf learners interacting and relating with other people, which assisted in improving their social skills as it made them adjust and change their attitudes and behaviours to accommodate other individuals within and outside their school, namely their peers, teachers, interpreters and community. The study also showed that the Deaf learners' interrelationships skills improved through their various activities like forming discussion groups and going to the playgrounds to play and have fun with their Hearing counterparts whom they recognised as helpful to their learning. Furthermore, the findings in this study also revealed that the participants indicated that the playgrounds at their school are also valuable resources which they regarded as enabling as it promoted and enhanced their emotional and social skills and enabled them to engage in activities that helped them to socialise, relax, become physically and mentally fit and also distress. Therefore, the study revealed that the presence of the various SSN within and outside the selected high school provided a valuable support, which is helpful towards the development and enhancement of the Deaf learners' academic, emotional and social skills, which influenced their learning positively. However, the findings in this theme also identified that the support and help made available by the identified SSN within and outside the school seem not to be enough to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners, as they suggested and requested the involvement and engagement of stakeholders, businesses, organisations and individuals to come forth and offer more support to them.

6.2.4 Theme Four: Multifaceted factors that inhibit school support networks to mitigate school dropout among deaf learners

The findings of this study also revealed that the Deaf learners were able to identify various factors within and outside their schools that could inhibit the SSN to mitigate school dropout amongst Deaf learners. The study showed the various factors as Deaf teachers' attitudes towards Deaf learners, lack of rapport and support from their peers, lack of Sign language skills, poor parental involvement, insufficient resources, discrimination and lack of sexual and health education, which can lead to unplanned pregnancies and contacting of sexually transmitted diseases amongst the Deaf learners. The findings also revealed in this study that the inhibiting factors mentioned above negatively influence the Deaf learners' growth, development and learning and cause them to develop stress, depression and anxiety in their academics which then lead to emotional and psychological imbalances, which cause them to drop out of school.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section lays out the recommendations that originated from the outcomes of the research study and those that were proposed by the Deaf learners who participated in this study. It is clearly indicated from the findings of the study that there are SSN at the selected high school, even though there seems to be a need for a well-structured system of the available support networks. The study has shown that Deaf learners need adequate support from all stakeholders, being their peers, teachers, interpreters, principal and administration, parents/guardians, community, volunteers, businesses, support groups and different organizations within and outside the school to enhance their learning. For this purpose, there are various measures identified by the participants, which schools can adopt to enhance their Deaf learners' academic performance, to ensure they develop holistically and that they never dropout from school. Therefore, the measures stated below could be used by the selected high school, as well as other schools accommodating Deaf learners in Lesotho, such as

preschools, primary schools and institutes of higher learning. Other countries can also consider and employ these measures to enhance their Deaf learners' learning.

The researcher therefore strongly recommends:

- The provision of intervention programmes or services for Deaf learners and their families to learn SL.
- SL should be used as medium or language of instruction for Deaf learners at an early age that is at Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) and then taught as a subject from Foundation Phase and upwards.
- Creation of a welcoming and supportive environment for Deaf learners in their local communities in order for them to grow, develop and utilise their realised and unrealised strengths and potentials
- Full Deaf learners' parental involvement in Deaf education which is an essential predictor of their academic achievements.
- Good relationship between the parents/guardians and teachers as to work harmoniously and share information on how to aid the Deaf learners to perform well within and beyond the school environment.
- Annual orientation for new learners both Deaf and Hearing, as well as new teachers to have an idea of what kind of school this is, which types of learners are accommodated, and mostly to know their roles and responsibilities in developing a welcoming environment at their school to enhance better learning for every individual to develop holistically.
- Good learner-learner relationships for developing confidence and a sense of belonging as to reduce depression, anxiety and stress among Deaf learners.
- Proper training of teachers and interpreters working with Deaf learners
- Hiring of trained and qualified teachers and interpreters who are experts in using SL for easy communication.
- Use of appropriate teaching methods and resources, which are known as Deaf-friendly methods and resources.
- Improved teaching and learning methods by encouraging learning with visual and technical methods and resources.

- Focus group discussions and collage constructions also to be used to promote critical thinking, easy communication and creativity and create active learning among Deaf learners at a selected high school.
- Capacity building of teachers and interpreters by Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) on staff competency.
- Support of teachers from MoET to facilitate learning at a selected high school and all other schools accommodating Deaf learners in Lesotho.
- Possession of an occupational therapist by the school, who will help to assess all Deaf learners, advise on their referrals, placement and with other services like counselling.
- Mutual respect among all learners at the selected high school, irrespective of their ability or disability; to share educational activities and encourage the use and development of their strengths to support one another.
- More support is also required from the peers, teachers, interpreters and parents/guardians to assist, and to encourage and help Deaf learners in their learning.
- Teachers to recognise school support networks as an approach towards mitigating challenges at school and daily life.
- Advanced teaching and learning technologies should be implemented at the selected high school in order to equip the Deaf learners with the necessary skills that will enhance their learning.
- Inclusion of Deaf learners in the decision-making process in issues related to their learning and development at the selected high school so that their views and voices can be heard and considered.
- More sponsorship and financial support is needed and required for all Deaf learners for them to access their educational needs.
- More collaboration and connection between the school and community is needed in order to create more opportunities for Deaf learners.
- Creation of more learning spaces with good infrastructures and with high tech technologies is needed at the selected high school in order to have a good seating arrangement and proper classroom acoustics to support learners in

developing their skills through promoting collaborative learning, doing group work and sharing ideas and information.

- All stakeholders in Deaf education are required to have a good understanding of the needs of Deaf learners and provide needed resources to create active learning among them.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While much has been written about how the participants (Deaf learners) in this study understand SSN and how they could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school, the researcher is with the opinion that more research is required on this topic.

The following suggestions below are therefore presented for future research:

- An inquiry on the connection between the stakeholders' knowledge about SSN and the impact it has on mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners is needed.
- A study on the effectiveness of the fragmented strategies adopted by stakeholders in mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners should be undertaken.
- Further studies that focus on the learning experiences of Deaf learners from different backgrounds should be undertaken as to acquire understanding of their needs and be able to provide them with appropriate resources.
- Further studies exploring the effectiveness of teaching Deaf learners SL at an early age to enhance for effective communication in learning and development.
- Studies with bigger samples selected from different ranges of schools accommodating Deaf learners, such as pre-schools, primary schools, special schools, and institutes of higher learning could be carried out to explore the insights on Deaf learners' school dropout and its mitigation.
- School support networks be formulated and used to mitigate challenges Deaf learners face at school.

- Studies that explore how Deaf learners can be fully engaged in their learning activities, using participatory visual methodologies, should be conducted.
- Lastly, this study also contributed to the existing literature on the strength-based approach based on its merits aligning with the research. Therefore, further research is recommended to ascertain and investigate the use of a strength-based approach in education, especially in the context of Lesotho.

6.5 THE LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Editage Insights (2019) indicates that no study is completely flawless or inclusive of all possible aspects, hence all research studies have certain limitation. In this aspect, the constraints impacted were research context, sample size and access to the participants.

Research context: The context in which this research study was conducted was in only one high school, currently accommodating Deaf learners in Lesotho and not in other schools, like primary schools where Deaf learners are being taught with their Hearing counterparts.

Sample size: The study was limited to only nine Deaf learners from different backgrounds. However, the study did not include all Deaf learners accommodated at a selected high school, where this study was conducted.

Access to the participants: Firstly there was a Lesotho teachers' strike in 2019 that denied the researcher access to meet with the participants for data generation, as schools were closed. Secondly in 2020 schools were again closed due to Covid-19 lockdown regulations.

6.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study explored the understanding of school support networks by Deaf learners and how the identified SSN could be used to enhance strategies to mitigate school dropout amongst Deaf learners. The study showed that there were more constraining factors than enabling factors, which could inhibit the identified SSN to mitigate school dropout

among Deaf learners, and this implied that there is a pressing need for well-structured school support networks, involving all stakeholders for Deaf learners' development and academic growth. The study also revealed that Deaf learners' development and academic growth is determined by their level of support (peers, teachers, interpreters, principal and administrators, parents or guardians, community, individuals, support groups, businesses and various organizations). It is therefore the responsibility of all stakeholders to avail themselves to support, shape and improve the learning of Deaf learners.

REFERENCES

- AABRI. (2015). Factors contributing to secondary school dropout in an urban school district. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 29(1): 1-15.
- ABC Assignment Help. (2021). *Purpose and Importance of Various Learning Resources in Teaching and Imparting Education*. Available from <https://www.abcassignmenthelp.com/purpose-and-importance-of-various-learningresources-in-teaching-and-imparting-education>[accessed 14 March 2021].
- Akungu, J.A. (2014). *Influence of teaching and learning resources on students' performance in Kenya certificate of secondary education in free day secondary education in Embakasi district, Kenya* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Nairobi.
- Amselem, M.C. (2014). *Barriers to High School Completion Create Barriers to Economic Mobility*. Available from <https://www.heritage.org/education/report/barriershigh-school-completion-create-barriers-economic-mobility>[accessed 15 June 2018].
- Anderson, K. (2019). *Innovation examples of Community Involvement in Schools*. Available from <https://digitalpromise.org/2019/05/14/innovative-examples-community-involvement-schools/>[accessed 12 February 2020].
- Ansary, R. (2017). Socio-economic Factors of Dropout Situation in Rural Primary Education. A Study of Two Villages in Rajshahi District. *Sociology and Criminology - Open Access Journal*, 5(2): 1-6.
- Aranda, L. (2017). *Integration of Deaf Culture in Public Schools*. Available from www.thebuffandblue.net/?p=15566 [accessed 16 April 2020].
- Ark, T.V. (2017). *How School Networks Work and Why That's Important*. Available from <https://www.gettingsmart.com/2017/02/how-school-networks-work-and-why-thatsimportant/> [accessed 8 May 2019].
- Aussie Deaf Kids. (2019). *Terminology for deafness*. Available from <https://www.aussiedeafkids.org.au/terminology-for-deafness.htm>[accessed 19 July 2019].

- Baggett, L. (2018). *Two behaviours linked to high school dropout rates*. Available from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-behaviours-linked-high-school-dropout.html>[accessed 15 July 2020].
- Baker, S. & Scott, J. (2016). Sociocultural and Academic Considerations for School-Aged/Deaf and hard of hearing multilingual language learners: A case study of a Deaf Latina. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 161(1): 43-55.
- Baron, S., Stanly, T., Colomina, C. & Pereira, T. (2019). *Strength-based approach: Practice Framework and Practice Handbook*. UK: Department of Health & Social Care.
- Baskarada, S. (2014). Qualitative Case Study Guidelines. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(40): 1-18.
- Berge, S.S. & Ytterhus, B. (2015). Deaf and hearing high-school students' expectations for the role of educational sign language interpreter. *Society, Health & Vulnerability*, 6(1): 28969. <https://doi.org/10.3402/shv.v6.28969>
- Bergold, J. & Thomas, S. (2012). Participatory Research Methods: A Methodological Approach in Motion. *Participatory Qualitative Research*, 13(1): 191-222.
- Biggers, A. (2018). What's to know about deafness and hearing loss? Available from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/249285>[accessed 8 March 2020].
- Birchall, J. (2019). *Early marriage, pregnancy and girl child school dropout*. Available from <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/15655/pdf/470-early-marriagepregnancy-and-schooldropout.pdf>[accessed 24 May 2020].
- Blessing, M. (2020). *Meaning of Family*. Available from <https://family.lovetoknow.com/image/200821~family.jpg>[accessed 18 October 2020].
- Blog. (2020). *Triangulation – cross checking research findings*. Available from <https://www.nsfconsulting.com.au/triangulation>[accessed 10 August 2020].

- Borup, J. (2016). Teacher perceptions of learner-learner engagement at a cyber high school. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 17(3): 231-250.
- Brook, J. (2018). *Why strength-based programs can't ignore weaknesses*. Available from <https://www.strengthscope.com/strength-based-programs-cant-ignorweaknesses/>[accessed 27 October 2020].
- Brown, A. (2020). *What Is The Importance of Family In Modern Society?* Available from <https://www.betterhelp.com/advice/family/what-is-the-importance-of-family-in-modern-society/> [accessed 27 July 2020].
- Brutler-Kisber, L. & Poldma, T. (2010). The power of visual approaches in qualitative inquiry: The use of collage making and concept mapping. *Journal of Practice*, 6(2): 1-16.
- Canadian Association of the Deaf–Assosiation des Sourds du Canada. (2015). Definition of “Deaf”. Available from <https://www.cad.ca>[accessed 7 August 2019]
- Capella University. (2016). *The Importance of Support Networks for Adult Students*. Available from <https://www.capella.edu/blogs/cublog/support-networks-for-adultstudents/> [accessed 3 March 2021].
- Carter, I. (2017). *Human behavior in the social environment: A social systems approach*. London: Routledge.
- Carter, N., BryantLukosius D., Dicenso, A., Blythe, J. & Neville, A.J. (2014). The Use of Triangulation in Qualitative Research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5): 545-547.
- Caulfield, J. (2019). *How to do Thematic Analysis: A Step-by-Step Guide & Examples*. Available from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-analysis/>[accessed 10 October 2019].
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2019). *Family and Community Engagement*. Available from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/physicalactivity/familycommunity.htm>[accessed 27 July 2020].

- Charaf, A. (2019). *Youth and changing realities: perspectives from Southern Africa*. Available from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370912>[accessed 27 July 2020].
- Chen, G. (2021). Parental Involvement is Key to Student Success. Available from <https://www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/parental-involvement-is-key-to-student-success> [accessed 15 March 2021].
- Chenge, R.P., Chenge, E. & Maunganidze, L. (2017). Family Factors that contribute to school dropout in Rushinga District in Zimbabwe. *International Journal of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(4): 87-105.
- Chiwandire, D. & Vincent, L. (2019). Funding and inclusion in higher education institutions for students with disabilities. *African Journal of Disability*, 8(1): 1-12.
- Classroom Interpreting. (2020). *What is the role of an educational interpreter?* Available from <https://www.classroominterpreting.org/Parents/Role.asp>[accessed 15 October 2020].
- Cobigo, V., Martin, L. & Mcheimech, R. (2016). Understanding Community: *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 5(4): 181-203.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (2011). *Surveys, longitudinal, cross-sectional and trend studies: Research Methods in Education*, 7th ed. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Connolly, P. (2020). *Fair play -Talking with children about prejudice and discrimination*. Available from <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/1765/pdf/1765.pdf>[accessed 15 December 2020].
- Cram, F. & Mertens, M. (2015). *Transformation and indigenous frameworks for multi method and mixed methods research*. New Zealand: The Oxford Handbooks.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five Approaches*. London: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design, qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*: Thousand Oaks; CA: SAGE.

Crossman, A. (2020). *Understanding Purposive Sampling: Purposive Sampling*. Available from <https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-sampling-3026727>[accessed 17 May 2020].

Darden, V. (2019). Interpreters in the Community – Service Learning, Citizenship, and Civic Engagement. Available from <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/interpretingstudies/chapter/section-1> [accessed 28 June 2020].

Davitti, E. 2015. 9. Interpreter-mediated Parent–Teacher Talk. In Grujicic-Alatraste, L. (Ed.), *Linking discourse studies to professional practice* (pp. 176-200). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

De Witte, K., Cabus, S. J., Thyssen, G., Groot, W. & Maassen Van den Brink. (2013). A Critical Review of the Literature on School Dropout. DOI: 10.1016/j.edurev.2013.05.002

De Witte, K., Cabus, S., Thyssen, G., Groot, W. and van Den Brink, H.M., 2013. A critical review of the literature on school dropout. *Educational Research Review*, 10, pp.13-28.

Delpont, C.S.L. & Fouche, C.B. (2011). The qualitative research report. In De Vos, AS, Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B. & Delpont, C.S.L. (Eds.), *Research at Grassroots – For The Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*, 4th Ed (pp.424-430). Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Devault, G. (2019). *Establishing Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. Process-Market Research*. Available from <https://www.thebalancesmb.com/establishing-trustworthiness-in-qualitative-research2297042>[accessed 17 June 2020].

Devkota, H.R., Murray, E., Kett, M. & Groce, N. (2018). Are maternal healthcare services accessible to vulnerable group? A study among women with disabilities in rural Nepal. *PLoS one*, 13(7), p.e0200370. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0200370>

Dietrich, L., Zimmermann, D. & Hofman, J. (2020). The Importance of teacher-student relationships in classrooms with 'difficult' students: a multi-level moderation analysis of nine Berlin secondary schools. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 36(3): 408-423.

Douglas & Murray, E. (2018). *Zero Dropout Schools Initiative*. Available from <https://dgmt.co.za/dropout/>[accessed 8 August 2019].

Duan, W. & Bu, H. (2019). Randomized trial investigating of a single-session character-strength-based cognitive intervention on freshman's adaptability. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 29(1): 82-92.

Duarte, I., Santos, C.C., Rego, G. & Nunes, R. (2016). School failure in students who are normal-hearing or deaf with or without cochlear implants. *SpringerPlus*, 5(1): 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40064-016-1927-9>

Education Bureau. (2018). *Role of schools*. Available from <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/student-parents/ncs-students/support-to-school/role-of-school.html>[accessed 15 October 2020].

Elmusharaf, K. (2012). *Qualitative Sampling Techniques. Training Course in Sexual and Reproductive Health Research*. Available from <https://www.gfmer.ch/SRH-Course-2012/research-methodology/pdf/Qualitative-sampling-techniques-Elmusharaf-2012.pdf>[accessed 10 August 2019].

Eloff, I. & Swart, E. (2018). *Understanding Educational Psychology*. Cape Town: Juta.

Erbas, E. (2017). *Strategies that teachers use to support the inclusion of students who are deaf and hard of hearing*. Available from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/213850302.pdf>[accessed 10 October 2020].

ET2020 Working Group Schools. (2017). *Networks for learning and development across school education*. Available from <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu>[accessed 12 May 2019].

EU Commission AL. (2010). *TVETipedia Glossary – Dropout*. Available from <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/filt=all/id=155>[accessed 14 October 2019].

European Commission. (2018). *Networks for learning and development across school education: Guiding principles for policy development on the use of networks in school education system*. Available from <https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu> [accessed 12 May 2019].

Farnsworth, B. (2016). *Focus groups in Focus*. Available from <https://imotions.com/blog/focus-groups/> [accessed 15 July 2020].

Fernández-Suárez, A., Herrero, J., Pérez, B., Juarros-Basterretxea, J. & Rodríguez-Díaz, F.J., 2016. Risk factors for school dropout in a sample of juvenile offenders. *Frontiers in psychology*, 7, Article1993. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01993>

Flacks, J.H. & Boynton-Jarret, R. (2018). *A Strength-Based Approach to Screening Families for Health-related Social Needs*. Available from <https://cssp.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/08/Strengths-Based-Approaches-Screening-Families-FINAL.pdf> [accessed 26 August 2020].

Flaherty, M. (2015). What We Can Learn From Hearing Parents of Deaf Children: *Australasian Journal of Special and Inclusive Education*, 39(1): 67-84.

Formplus. (2016). *7 Data Collection Methods & Tools for Research*. Available from <https://www.formpl.us/blog/data-collection-method> [accessed 6 April 2020].

Francis, L. (2020). *What Is Collage? – Definition, Famous Artists & Examples*. Available from <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-collage-definition-famous-artistexamples.html> [accessed 9 June 2020].

Gaad, E. (2010). *Inclusive Education in the Middle East*, 1st Ed. New York: Routledge.

Galaviz, S. (2011). *Family & Community Engagement*. Available from <https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/engagement> [accessed 15 March 2021].

Gander, F., Proyer, R.T., Ruch, W. and Wyss, T., 2013. Strength-based positive interventions: Further evidence for their potential in enhancing well-being and alleviating depression. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 14(4): 1241-1259.

Garate, M., Batamula, C. & Kite, J.B. (2016). Deaf Education. *Oxford Bibliographies*.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199756810-0159>

Gerstenblatt, P. (2013). Collage Portraits as a Method of Analysis in Qualitative Research. *The International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 12(1): 294-309.

Ghazi, S.R., Ali, R., Shahzad, S., Gulap, S. & Nawaz, K. (2011). Socio-Economic Factors as a Cause of Children Dropout at Primary Level: *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(3): 531.

Ghofar, A., Abubakar, U. & Azhar, M. (2018). Tazkiyatun Nafs as a Strength Base of Teacher Personality Competency. *International Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities (IJISH)*, 1(2): 128-140.

Gil, A.J., Antelm-Lanzat, A.M., Cacheiro-González, M.L. & Pérez-Navío, E. (2019). School dropout factors: a teacher and school manager perspective. *Educational Studies*, 45(6): 756-770.

Goldkuhl, G. (2019). The generation of qualitative data in information systems research: the diversity of empirical research methods. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 44: 572-599.

Gottlieb, A.M. (2015). *Factors That Contribute To High School Drop-outs Earning Their High School Diploma*. Available from <https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1132&context=diss> [accessed 8 August 2019].

Greany, T. & Higham, R. (2018). *Hierarchy, markets and networks: Analysing the 'self-improving school-led system' agenda in England and the implications for schools*. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327499178_Hierarchy_Markets_and_Networks_Analysing_the_'self-improving_school-led_system'_agenda_in_England_and_the_implications_for_schools [accessed 8 November 2018].

Gudyanga, E., Wadesango, N., Eliphanos, H. & Gudyanga, A. (2014). Challenges faced by students with hearing Impairment in Bulawayo Urban Regular Schools. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(9): 445-451.

Guijt, M.I. (2014). *Participatory Approaches. Methodological Briefs Impact Evaluation No.5*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.

Guru99. (2021). *What is Data Analysis? Research Types Methods Techniques*. Available from <https://www.guru99.com/ethical-hacking-tutorials.html>[accessed 3 March 2021].

Gustafsson, J. (2017). *Single case studies vs. multiple case studies: A comparative study*. Available from <http://www.divaportal.org/smash/get/diva2:1064378/FULLTEXT01.pdf> [accessed 21 May 2020].

Habibi, C.S. (2017). The meaning of school from dropout's view point (a phenomenological study). Available from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED574126.pdf> [accessed 10 August 2021].

Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M. & deLacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction*, 31(3): 498-501.

Hartnack, A. (2017). *Background document and review of key South African and international literature on school dropout*. Available from <http://dgmt.co.za/wpcontent/uploads/2017/08/School-Dropout-Background-Paper-Final.pdf>[accessed 10 July 2020].

Herbert-Smith, K. (2019). *Training vs. professional development – What's the difference and does it matter*. Available from <https://blog.irisconnect.com/us/training-vsprofessional-development-whats-the-difference-and-does-it-matter>[accessed 27 July 2020].

Heyerick, I. & Vermeerbergen, M. (2012). *Sign Language Interpreting in Educational Settings in Flanders, Belgium*. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264553786_Sign_Language_Interpreting_in_Educational_Settings_in_Flanders_Belgium[accessed 15 March 2021].

Hobbs, C.M. & Power, J. (2013). *Engaging Disadvantaged Young People In The Course Of Their Lives: The Importance of Staff/Student Relationships in Alternative*

Education. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312115389_Engaging_disadvantaged_young_people_in_alternative_education_The_importance_of_staff-student_relationships[accessed 10 July 2020].

Hughes, C. & Carter, E. (2017). *14 Ways to Support All Learners at School and Home*. Available from <https://blog.brookespublishing.com/14-ways-to-support-all-learners-at-school-and-home/> [accessed 15 March 2021].

Institute for Educational Leadership. (2020). *Coalition for Community Schools*. Available from <https://www.communityschools.org>[accessed 15 October 2020].

International Survey Associates. (2016). *Why Community Involvement in Schools is important*. Available from <https://www.pridesurveys.com/index.php/blog/community-involvement-in-schools/>[accessed 14 October 2020].

IPL (2020). *The Causes and Effects of Dropping out of High School*. Available from <https://www.ipl.org/essay/The-Causes-And-Effects-Of-Dropping-Out-FKVS5S7EACP6>[accessed 14 October 2020].

Iqbal, K. (2018). *Community in the school and school in the community*. Available from <https://blog.optimus-education.com/community-school-and-school-community>[accessed 15 October 2020].

Jach, H.K., Sun, J., Loton, D., Chin, T.C. & Waters, L.E. (2018). Strengths and subjective wellbeing in adolescence: Strength-based parenting and the moderating effect of mindset. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 19(2), 567-586. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-9841-y>

Jarnot, K. (2020). *School Views: The advantages of community schools*. Available from <https://www.vaildaily.com/opinion/school-views-the-advantages-of-community-schools/> [accessed 25 July 2020].

Joanna, S. (2017). *School dropout rates may be linked to negative peer pressure*. Available from <https://www.teachingpersonnel.com/news/school-dropout-rates-may-be-linked-to-negative-peer-pressure--78021151834>[accessed 25 July 2020].

Jones, J. (2017). *The Two Problems with the Strengths-Based Approach*. Available from <https://drjasonjones.com/characterstrengthsapproach/>[accessed 27 July 2020].

Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E. & Stavropoulou, M. (2018). *Adolescents with disabilities: Enhancing resilience and delivering inclusive development*. Available from <https://www.gage.odi.org/publication/adolescents-disabilities-enhancing-resilience-anddelivering-inclusive-development-report/>[accessed 16 April 2020].

Jones, P.O. (2020). *Sign Language Interpreters Provide Crucial Access to Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing Audiences*. Available from <https://medium.com/winmipodcast/how-andwhy-sign-language-interpreters-provide-access-to-deaf-hard-of-hearing-audiences2bf3d68838af>[accessed 15 March 2021].

Kabir, S.M.S. (2016). *METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION*. Available from <http://www.researchgate.net> [accessed 6 April 2020].

Kainuwa, A., Yusuf, M. & Saibon, J. (2018). Relationship between parental economic factors and students' dropouts from government secondary schools of Zamfara, Nigeria. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*, 32: 29-43.

Kalpna, M. (2020). *Parent-Child relationship: Why Is It Important and How to Build It?* Available from https://www.momjunction.com/articles/helpful-tips-to-strengthen-parentchild-bonding_0079667/[accessed 31 August 2020].

Kattan, R.B. & Szekely, M. (2015). Patterns, Consequences, and Possible Causes of Dropout in Upper Secondary Education in Mexico. *Educational Research International*, 2015, Article ID 676472. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/676472>

Katulkar, R. (2018). *Exploring lack of Interest as a Cause of Dropout of the Children of Scavenging Communities*. Available from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329537141_Exploring_Lack_of_Interest_as_a_Cause_of_Dropout_of_the_Children_of_Scavenging_Communities[accessed 14 October 2020].

- Khan, A. (2018). *Parent-Child Relationship – Tips to Develop Healthy Bonding*. Available from <https://parenting.firstcry.com/articles/parent-child-relationship-tips-to-develop-healthy-bonding/>[accessed 31 August 2020].
- King, I. (2019). Importance of Parent-Teacher Communication and Relationship. Available from <https://www.kickboardforschools.com/family-engagement-communication/importance-of-parent-teacher-communication-and-relationships/>[accessed 15 March 2020].
- Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A.B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5): 26-41.
- Koc, M., Zorbaz, O. & Demirtas-Zorbaz, S. (2020). Has the ship sailed? The causes and consequences of school dropout from an ecological viewpoint. *Social Psychology of Education*, 23(5): 1149-1171.
- Koshy, E., Koshy, V. & Waterman, H. (2010). *Action research for improving educational practice: Action research in healthcare*, 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications Inc.
- Kulkarni, P. (2013). *What is triangulation of data in qualitative research? Is it a method of validating the information collected through various methods?* Available from <https://www.researchgate.net/post/What-is-triangulation-of-data-in-qualitative-researchIs-it-a-method-of-validating-the-information-collected-through-various-methods>[accessed 11 June 2020].
- Kuna, A.S. (2012). *Learner Interaction Patterns and Student Perceptions towards using Selected Tools in An Online Course Management System*. Available from <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3380&context=etd>[accessed 14 October 2020].
- Landsburg, E. Kruger, D. & Swart, E. (2011). *Addressing barriers to learning: A South African perspective*, 2nd Ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Language People. (2020). *Providing Interpretation in Education Settings*. Available from <https://www.languagepeople.com/providing-interpretation-in-educational-settings/>[accessed 5 March 2020].

- Lavrentsova, E. & Valkov, P. (2019). Risk Factors for Early School Leaving in Bulgaria. *Bulgarian Journal of Educational Research and Practice. Pedagogika–Pedagogy*, 91(7): 946-962.
- Learners Edge. (2016). *4 Ways to Create a Classroom Community*. Available from <https://www.learnersedge.com/blog/4-ways-to-create-a-classroom-community>[accessed 27 July 2020].
- Leavy, P. (2019). *Handbook of Arts-Based Research*, 1st Ed. London: Guilford Press.
- Lee-St. John, T.J., Walsh, M.E., Raczek, A.E., Vuilleumier, C.E., Foley, C., Heberle, A., Sibley, E. & Dearing, E. (2018). The long-term impact of systemic student support in elementary school: Reducing high school dropout. *AERA Open*, 4(4), p.2332858418799085.
- Lesotho Education Language Policy (LELP). (2019). *Lesotho Education Language Policy*. Lesotho: Ministry of Education and Training.
- Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy (LIEP). (2018). *Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy*, Lesotho: Ministry of Education and Training.
- Lincoln Journal Star. (2015). *Donald O. Clifton's achievements*. Available from https://journalstar.com/donald-o-cliftons-achievements/article_9c8cd23d-7dfe-50d7bb18-abcd9fe50df5.html[accessed 21 August 2020].
- Locus Assignments (2012). *The Importance of Teacher-Student relationships*. Available from <https://www.locusassignments.com/the-importance-of-teacher-studentrelationships/>[accessed 3 March 2020].
- Lynch, M. (2016). *Allocating Resources to Improve Student Learning*. Available from <https://www.theedadvocate.org/allocating-resources-to-improve-student-learning/>[accessed 3 March 2021].
- MacArthur, J., Rawana, E.P. & Brownlee, K. (2011). Implementation of a Strengths-Based Approach in the Practice of Child and Youth Care. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice*, 24(3): 6-16.

Mahlo, D. (2017). *Inclusive education in African contexts, a critical reader*. The Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Mahlomaholo, S. (2012). Early school leavers and sustainable learning environments in rural contexts: *Perspectives in Education*, 30(1): 101-110.

Mahoney, J.L. (2018). *School dropout*. In Bornstein, M.H. (ed.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of lifespan human development*. London: Sage.

Majoko, T. (2018). Participation in higher education: Voices of students with disabilities. *Cogent Education*, 5(1), p.1542761. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2018.1542761>

Marphatia, A.A., Reid, A.M. and Yajnik, C.S. (2019). Developmental origins of secondary school dropout in rural India and its differential consequences by sex: a biosocial life-course analysis. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 66: 8-23.

Martin, A.J. & Collie, R.J. (2018). Teacher-Student Relationships and Students' Engagement in High School: Does the Number of Negative and Positive Relationships With Teachers Matter? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(5). <http://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000317>

Matlosa, L. & Matobo, T. (2007). *The Education System in Lesotho: Social Inclusion and exclusion of visual impaired and hearing impaired persons in the Institutions of Higher Learning*. Available from <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/6395> [accessed 8 April 2020].

Mayaba, N.N. & Wood, L. (2015). Using drawings and collages as data generation methods with children: Definitely not child's play. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14(5), p.1609406915621407.

McCamey Jr, J.D. & Payne, T.B. (2015). A Strength-based Approach to Working with African-American Youth in Poverty. *International Journal of Arts and Commerce*, 4(4): 213-223.

McCombes, S. (2019). *An introduction to sampling methods: Sampling Methods /Types and Techniques Explained*. Available from <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/sampling-methods/>[accessed 17 July 2020].

McCormick, R. (2015). *High-school dropouts are much more likely to die in traffic accidents than college grads*. Available from <https://www.theverge.com/2015/10/2/9438197/traffic-accident-study-education-leveldeaths>[accessed 14 October 2020].

McGuckin, C. Shevlin, M., Bell, S. & Devecchi, C. (2013). *Moving to Further and Higher Education: An Exploration of the Experiences of Students with Special Educational Needs National Council for Special Education Report (NCSE)*. Available from https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Report_14_Higher_Ed_09_04_14.pdf[accessed 22 April 2020].

McLeod, S. (2012). *Low self-esteem*. Available from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/self-esteem.html> [accessed July 2020].

McLeod, S. (2019). *Case Study Method in Psychology*. Available from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/case-study.html>[accessed 22 July 2020].

McMillan, H. & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education*. New Jersey: Kevin M. Davis.

MeraEvents. (2020). Importance of Professional Development for Teachers. Available from <https://www.mereevents.com/blog/importance-of-professional-development-for-teachers> [accessed 15 March 2020].

Ministry of Education & Training (MoET). (2015). *Curriculum Policy*: Lesotho: Ministry of Education and Training.

Ministry of Education & Training (MoET). (2018). *Lesotho Inclusive Education Policy*. Lesotho: Ministry of Education and Training.

- Ministry of Education, Guyana (2016). *The Importance of Learning Materials in Teaching*. Available from <https://education.gov.gy/web/index.php/teachers/tips-for-teaching/item/2036-the-importance-of-learning-materials-in-teaching>[accessed 15 March 2021].
- Mitchell, C., Naydessane, L. & Moletsane, R. (2017). *Participatory visual methodologies: Social change, community and policy*. London: Sage.
- Mkandawire, M.T., Maphale, S.P. & Tseeke, M.R. (2016). A comparative assessment of special education situations between Lesotho and Malawi. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 4(5): 171-184.
- Mkwananzi, S., Mkwananzi, B. & De Wet, N. (2014). School Dropout among African Adolescents in South Africa: Is there any gender difference. *Gender and Behaviour*, 12(4): 1-23.
- Mnguni, I.B. (2014). *Investigating the causes of learner dropout at secondary schools in Johannesburg South, Gauteng*. Available from <https://docplayer.net/43847918-Investigating-the-causes-of-learner-dropout-at-secondary-schools-in-johannesburg-south-gauteng-mnguni-innocent-bongani-master-of-education.html>[accessed 25 July 2020].
- Mogashoa, T. (2018). A critical review of the kind of training or professional development typically offered to the teachers. In Mahlangu, V.P. (Ed.), *Reimagining New Approaches in Teacher Professional Development* (pp.21-30). IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.78741>
- Molupe, G. (2020). *Lesotho: teenage pregnancy growing concern: gender links for equality and justice*. Available from <https://genderlinks.org.za/news/lesotho-teenage-pregnancy-growing-concern-intsanatalana/>[Accessed 16 April 2020].
- Morin, A. (2021). How Parents and Teachers Can Work Together for the Child's Benefit. Available from <https://www.verywellfamily.com/parents-and-teachers-working-together-620922> [accessed 15 March 2021].

Mpofu, J. & Chimhenga, S. (2013). Challenges faced by Hearing Impaired pupils in learning: A case study of King George VI Memorial School. *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 2(1): 69-74.

Mustaffa, R. (2014). *Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources*. Available from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/250803622/Triangulation-is-a-powerful-technique-thatfacilitates-validation-of-data-through-cross-verification-from-two-or-more-sources-docx>[accessed 10 August 2020].

Musyoka, M.M., Gentry, M.A. & Bartlett, J.J. (2016). Voices from the Classroom: Experiences of Teachers of Deaf Students with Additional Disabilities. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(2): 1-12.

Mwanyuma, R.M. (2016). *Factors influencing the academic achievement of deaf learners in Kilifi County, Kenya: A case of Sahajanand School for the Deaf* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Nairobi.

Naidoo, S.S. (2008). *Science education for deaf learners: educator perspectives and perceptions* (Doctoral dissertation). Wits University.

Namakau, N. (2019). *Factors associated with Deaf pupils dropping out from schools*. Available from https://www.academia.edu/10572292/factors_associated_with_deaf_pupils_dropping_out_from_school[accessed 11 April 2019].

National Association of the Deaf (NAD). (2020). *Community Participation*. Available from <https://www.nad.org/resources/early-intervention-for-infants-and-toddlers/community-participation/>[accessed 20 May 2020].

National Center of Education Statistics. (2017). *Activities to promote Parents Involvement*. Available from https://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/curr200.shtml[accessed 27 July 2020].

National Deaf Center (2018). *Sign Language Interpreters in the Classroom*. Available from [https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/sites/default/files/Sign%20Language%20Interpreters %20in%20the%20Classroom.pdf](https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/sites/default/files/Sign%20Language%20Interpreters%20in%20the%20Classroom.pdf)[accessed 15 March 2021].

Ngobeni, W.P. (2017). *The Effect of Sign Language Barriers Among Deaf Learners: A Case Study of a Special School in Motheo District South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation). Central University of Technology, Free State.

Ngobeni, W.P., Maimane, J.R. & Rankhumise, M.P. (2020). The effect of limited sign language as barrier to teaching and learning among Deaf learners in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 40(2): Article 1735. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v40n2a1735>

Nordquist, R. (2019). Definition Examples of Collage Essays. Available from <https://www.thoughtco.com>[accessed 8 March 2020].

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. & Moules, N.J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), p.1609406917733847.

Ntinda, K., Thwala, S.K. & Tfusi, B. (2019). Experiences of Teachers of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in a Special Needs School: An Exploratory Study. *Journal of Education and training Studies*, 7(7): 79-89.

O'Keefe, B. (2011). *5 Steps to Better School/Community Collaboration*. Available from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/school-community-collaboration-brendan-okeefe>[accessed 15 March 2021].

O'Shea, D. (2017). *5 advantages of having a strong support system - You Are Not An Island*. Available from <https://www.droshea.com/blog/you-are-not-an-island>[accessed 23 January 2021].

Omollo, A.E. & Yambo, O.J.M. (2017). Influence of Peer Pressure on Secondary School Students Drop out in Rongo Sub-Country, Migori Country, Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 8(9). Available from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1138838.pdf>[accessed 2 August 2020].

Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). (2009). *The Professional Development of Teachers*. Available from <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/43541636.pdf>[accessed 3 March 2021].

Osher, D., Kendziora, K., Spier, E. & Garibaldi, M.L. (2014). School influences on child and youth development. In Sloboda, Z. & Petras, H. (Eds.), *Defining prevention science* (pp. 151-169). New York, NY: Springer.

Ottosen, K.O., Goll, C.B., & Sørli, T. (2019). 'From a sense of failure to a proactive life orientation': First year high school dropout experiences and future life expectations in Norwegian youth. *International Social Work*, 62(2): 684-698.

Palinkas, L.A., Horwitz, S.M., Green, C.A., Wisdom, J.P., Duan, N. & Hoagwood, K. (2013). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health Service Research*, 42(5): 533-544.

Participate (2021). *Participatory Research Methods*. Available from <https://participatesdgs.org/methods/#:-:text=Participatory%20research%20comprises%20a%20range,members%20or%20community%2Dbased%20organisations.&text=Participatory%20research%20involves%20inquiry%2C%20but%20also%20action>. [accessed 15 March 2021].

Participatory Research. (2020). *Participatory Research: Encyclopaedias almanacs transcripts and maps*>Participatory Research. Available from <https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/participatory-research>[accessed 20 May 2020].

Pattoni, L. (2012). *Strength-based approaches for working with individuals*. Available from <https://www.iriss.org.uk/resources/insights/strengths-based-approaches-working-individuals>[accessed 23 August 2020].

Pegg, M. (2019). *C is for Don Clifton: His work on Strengths and with Gallup – The Positive Encourager*. Available from <https://www.thepositiveencourager.global/doncliftons-approach-to-doing-positive-work/>[accessed 21 August 2020].

PeoplePill. (2019). *About Donald O. Clifton: American psychologist and educator (1924 - 2003)*. Available from <https://peoplepill.com/people/donald-o-clifton>[accessed 18 October 2020].

Peters, D. (2015). *A strength-based approach helps children*. Available from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/worrier-warrior/201504/strength-basedapproach-helps-children> [accessed 11 June 2019].

Phirangee, K. (2016). Students' Perceptions of Learner-Learner Interactions that Weaken a Sense of Community in an Online Learning Environment: *Online Learning*, 20(4): 13-33.

Polakow, S. (2012). *School support networks more responsible than ever*. New York: School Book.

PrideSurveys. (2016). Why Community Involvement in Schools Is Important. Available from <https://www.pridesurveys.com/index.php/blog/community-involvement-in-schools/> [accessed 20 June 2019].

Psychology Today. (2020). *Strength-Based Theory*. Available from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/za/therapy-types/strength-based-therapy>[accessed 21 August 2020].

Pulla, V.R. (2017). Strength-Based Approach in Social Work: A distinct ethical advantage: *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 3(2): 97-114.

QuestionPro. (2021). *Research Design: Definition, Characteristics and Types*. Available from <https://www.questionpro.com/blog/research-design>[accessed 8 March 2021].

Ramsdal, G.H., Bergvik, S. & Wynn, R. (2018). Long-term dropout from school and work and mental health in young adults in Norway: A qualitative interview-based study. *Cogent Psychology*, 5(1), p.1455365.

Reseau reussit Montreal. (2020). *Dropping out of school*. Available from www.reseaureussitemontreal.ca/en/perseverance-in-montreal/perseverance-anddropping-out/dropping-out-of-school/[accessed 15 March 2021].

Rosen, R. (2016). The Power and Promise of a Handshake: Milestones in Collaboration. *Odyssey: New Directions in Deaf Education*, 17: 38-42.

Rosenfeld, L.B., Richman, J.M. & Bowen, G.L. (2000). Social Support Networks and School Outcomes: The Centrality of the Teacher. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 17(3): 205-226.

Roulston, K. (2018). *Triangulation in qualitative research*. Available from <https://qualpage.com/2018/01/18/triangulation-in-qualitative-research/>[accessed 11 June 2020]

Safari, J.P. (2016). *Institutional Causes of School Dropout in Rwanda: Perspectives of Community Education Workers*. Available from <https://scalar.usc.edu/works/cec-journalissue-2/institutional-causes-of-school-dropout-in-rwanda-perspectives-of-communityeducation-workers>[accessed 27 June 2020].

Santosh, B.K. (2014). *How Can Policy Makers Better Understand 21st Century Education?* Available from <https://edtechreview.in/trends-insights/insights/767-how-can-policy-makers-better-understand-21st-century-education>[accessed 15 October 2020].

Saul, R. (2015). *What is the influence of teacher-student relationships on learning?* Available from <https://www.edcan.ca/articles/what-is-the-influence-of-teacher-student-relationships-on-learning/> [accessed 15 March 2020].

Science Daily. (2019). *Genes and family are biggest predictor of academic success*. Available from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/12/191218153459.htm>[accessed 18 October 2020].

Sekine, K. & Hodgkin, E.M. (2017). *Effect of child marriage on girls' school dropout in Nepal: Analysis of data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014*. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0180176

Shantikumar, S. (2018). *Methods of sampling from a population*. Available from <https://www.healthknowledge.org.uk/public-health-textbook/research-methods/1aepi/demiology/methods-of-sampling-population> [accessed 27 May 2020].

Sign Language Interpreter. (2019). *Sign Language Interpreter: Job Description, Duties and Requirements*. Available from <https://study.com> [accessed 15 October 2020].

Silverman, D. (2010). *Qualitative research*. London: Sage.

Soares, T.M., Fernandes, N.D.S., Nóbrega, M.C. and Nicolella, A.C., 2015. Factors associated with dropout rates in public secondary education in Minas Gerais. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 41: 757-772.

Souci, N. (2021). The importance of Peer Learning. Available from <https://challengeme.online/en/peer-learning-2/>

Sparks, S.D. (2019). *Why Teacher-Student Relationships Matter*. Available from <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/why-teacher-student-relationships-matter/2019/03> [accessed 15 March 2020].

Special Education Guide (2013). *Definition of "Deafness"*. Available from <https://www.specialeducationguide.com/disability-profiles/deafness/> [accessed 19 July 2020].

SpriggHR. (2021). The Benefits of Peer to Peer learning. Available from <https://sprigghr.com/blog/hr-professionals/the-benefits-of-peer-to-peer-learning/> [accessed 15 March 2021].

State of Victoria. (2012). *Strength-based approach—Department of Education and Training Victoria*. Available from https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/childhood/professionals/learning/strengthb_appr.pdf [accessed 19 July 2020].

Stoerker, E. (2019). *What is a Strength-Based Approach? (Inch Activities and Examples)*. Available from <https://positivepsychology.com/strengths-based-interventions/> [accessed 22 August 2020].

Stuart, G. (2016). *Seven principles for a strength-based approach to working with groups*. Available from <https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2016/08/23/sbagroups/> [accessed 26 August 2020].

Sturkey, L. (2015). *Coding qualitative research data*. USA: University of Medicine.

Sutton, J. & Austin, Z. (2015) Qualitative Research: Data Collection, Analysis and Management: *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, 68(3): 226-231.

Swartz, M.K. (2017). A Strength-Based Approach to care. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 31(1): 1.

Szymanski, C., Lutz, L., Shahan, C. & Gala, N. (2013). Critical Needs of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Public Input Summary. Washington, D.C.: Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center.

Tasner, M. (2019). *Why a Parent-Child Relationship is important?* Available from <https://www.thepillarsclc.com/why-a-parent-child-relationship-is-important/>[accessed 31 August 2020].

Temblador, A. (2015). *Defining Family in My Life As a Zucchini*. Available from <https://www.123helpme.com/essay/Defining-Family-In-My-Life-As-A-PCLS6UGD2R>[accessed 18 October 2020].

The Canadian Association of the Deaf-Association des Sourds du Canada. (2015). *Definition of "Deaf"*. Available from <http://cad.ca/issues-positions/definition-of-> [accessed 7 August 2019].

The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). (2018). Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol New York: United Nations Assembly. Available from www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf [accessed 6 November 2020].

The Educator. (2019). *Study highlights impact of teacher-student relationship*. Available from <https://www.theeducatoronline.com/k12/news/study-highlights-impact-of-teacher-student-relationships/266029> [accessed 14 October 2020].

The Glossary of Education Reform. (2013). *Academic Support Definition*. Available from <https://www.edglossary.org/academic-support/#:~:text=LAST%20UPDATED%3A%2008.29.13,or%20generally%20succeed%20in%20school> [accessed 3 March 2021].

The New Learn. (2016). POLICY MAKERS: Meeting the Inclusion Agenda: Taking the Matter into Our Own Hands By Ankur Madan. Available from <https://www.thenewlearn.com/2016/05/policy-makers-meeting-the-inclusion-agenda-taking-the-matter-into-our-hands-by-ankur-madan/> [accessed 17 July 2020].

Theunissen, S.C.M.P., Rieffe, C., Netten, A.P., Briaire, J.J., Soede, W., Kouwenberg, M. & Fryns, J.H.M. (2014). Self-Esteem in Hearing-Impaired Children: The Influence of Communication, Education and Audio logical Characteristics. *PloS one*, 9(4), p.e94521.

United Nations (UN). (2018). *Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*. Available from [www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptrot-e.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf) [accessed 6 November 2020].

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2012). *UN Global Education Digest: Opportunities lost. The impact of grade repetition and early school leaving, 10th Ed.* Available from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-education-digest-2012-opportunities-lost-impactgrade-repetition-and-early> [accessed 14 April 2019].

University at Buffalo. (2021). Developing Your Support System. Available from <https://www.socialwork.buffalo.edu> [accessed 7 March 2021].

University of Washington. (2019). *How can I develop a support network?* Available from <https://www.washington.edu/doi/how-can-i-develop-support-network> [accessed 1 December 2020].

Vaughn, M.G., Salas-Wright, C.P. & Maynard, B.R. (2014). Dropping out of school and chronic disease in the United States. *Journal of Public Health*, 22(3): 265-270.

- Verma, S. (2015). *10 Common Reasons why Students Drop Out From School*. Available from <https://listsurge.com/10-common-reasons-why-students-drop-out-fromschool/> [accessed 15 July 2020].
- Victoria State Government. (2018). *Embedding a strength-based approach in client conversations*. Available from <https://www.hwpcp.org.au/wp->
- Victoria State Government. (2019). *Support at school for hearing loss-Department of Education*. Available from <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/parents/additionalneeds/Pages/hearing-school-support.aspx>[accessed 27 April 2020].
- Wahba, M. (2013). *Definition of dropout. TVETipedia glossary MW*. Available from <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVETipedia+Glossary/filt=all/id=155>[accessed 17 May 2020].
- Wanders, F.H.K. (2020). The effect of teacher-student and student-student relationships on the societal involvement of students. *Research Paper in Education*, 35(3): 266-286.
- Warburton, D.E.R. & Bredin, S.S.D. (2019). Health Benefits of Physical activities: A Strength-Based Approach: *Journal of Clinical Medicine*, 8(12): 2014-2044.
- Waterford. (2019). *Why Strong Teacher Relationships Lead to Student Engagement and Better School Environment*. Available from <https://www.waterford.org/education/teacher-student-relationships/>[accessed 15 March 2021].
- Watson, S. (2019). Recognizing Characteristics of Deafness and Hearing Loss in Students. Available from <https://www.thoughtco.com/recognizing-characteristics-of-deafness-3110771> [accessed 13 October 2020].
- Weber, M.L. (2016). *10 Challenges Deaf Students Face in the Classroom*. Available from <https://www.gettingsmart.com/2016/08/10-challenges-deaf-students-face-in-the-classroom/> [accessed 16 October 2020].
- Webster, M. (2018). *Definition of collage*. Available from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/collage> [accessed 11 September 2020].

- Webster, M. (2020). Definition of community. Available from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community#:~:text=a%20%3A%20the%20people%20with%20common,retired%20persons%20a%20monastic%20community> [accessed 11 September 2020].
- Weybright, E.H., Caldwell, L.L., Xie, H., Wegner, L. & Smith, E.A. (2017). Predicting secondary school dropout among South African adolescents: A survival analysis approach. *South African Journal of Education*, 37(2): 1-11.
- William, M.K. (2020). *Sampling: Research Methods Knowledge Base*. Available from <https://conjointly.com/kb/sampling-in-research/>[accessed 27 May 2020].
- Willis, B. (2014). *The Advantages and Limitations of Single Case Study Analysis*. Available from <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/07/05/the-advantages-and-limitations-of-single-case-study-analysis/>[accessed 21 May 2020].
- World Bank. (2015). *Half of youth in Sub-Saharan Africa Are Out of School*. Available from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/07/15/half-of-subsaharan-african-youth-are-out-of-school>[accessed 27 July 2020].
- WHO. (2018). Deafness and hearing loss. Available from <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/deafness-and-hearing-loss> [accessed 4 May 2020].
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2020). *Adolescent pregnancy*. Available from <https://www.who.int/newsroom/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>[accessed 9 September 2020].
- Xie, Y.H., Potmesil, M. & Peters, B. (2014). Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in Inclusive Education Setting: A Literature Review on Interactions With Peers. *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 19(4): 423-437.
- Zacarian, D., Alvarez-Ortiz, L. & Haynes, J. (2017). *Teaching to strengths: Supporting students living with trauma, violence, and chronic stress*. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD.
- Zhang, L. (2014). *Reflections on the strength based perspective of a social worker*. Available from <https://www.grin.com/document/341879>[accessed 27 July 2020].

Zille, H. (2016). *How collaboration can transform underperforming schools*. Available from <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/how-collaboration-can-transform-underperforming-schools>[accessed 3 March 2020].

Zitzman, B. (2020). *Why Your Family Matters-Importance of Family?* Available from <https://www.familytoday.com/relationships/importance-of-family/> [accessed 6 September 2020]

Zugaib, C. (2016). *Differences between deaf and hard of hearing - Hearing Like Me*. Available from <https://www.hearinglikeme.com/differences-between-a-child-who-is-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing/>[accessed 15 September 2020].

Zwart, R.C., Korthagen, F.A.J. & Attemma-Noordewier, S. (2015). A strength-based approach to teacher development. *Professional Development in Education*, 41(3): 579-596.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS STATEMENT



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

28-Nov-2019

Dear Mrs Makatse, Mapu'ane MC

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

MITIGATING SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS THROUGH SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS: A CASE STUDY

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2019/1708

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

Yours sincerely

Prof Derek Lithauer

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Digitally signed
by Derek
Lithauer
Date: 2019.11.29
16:13:58 +02:00

305 Nelson Mandela
Drive
Park West
Bloemfontein 9301
South Africa

Tel: 051 339 539
Bloemfontein 9300
Tel: 051 401 9387
3619 / 3682
eths@ufs.ac.za
www.ufs.ac.za



APPENDIX B: LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

P.O.BOX 93
LISEMENG II
LERIBE 300

13 AUGUST 2019

THE CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER
LERIBE 300
LESOTHO

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Mapulane Cecilia Makatse, a specialist teacher and Sign-Language interpreter at Mount Royal high school, also a student in the University of the Free State. I am doing Masters Degree in psychology of education on the title “**Mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners through school support networks: case study**” and would like to request permission to conduct my research at one high school accommodating Deaf learners where they are taught with their hearing counterparts being Mt Royal High School.

The reasons of choosing this particular school is because it is the only high school currently in our country accommodating Deaf learners where they are being taught with their hearing counterparts in an setting and the aim of my study is to explore how school support networks could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

Furthermore, this study will add the value in the following manner:

- Provide clear understanding of school support networks perceived to be available and how they can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

- Teachers will have to demonstrate their multiple competencies to improve quality of education, teach in Deaf-friendly way to create thriving people and flexible environment for everyone.
- Parental involvement in their children's education is important as to encourage them to use and develop their strengths.
- Community involvement is also needed for helping Deaf learners become compatible community members.
- Policy makers in the Ministry of Education and Training will have access to the findings and recommendations of the study and be considered in policies and reforms by including diverse voices including those of Deaf learners.
- Higher education institutions such as teacher training colleges and universities could benefit by teaching educators or teachers to recognise school support networks as a good approach towards mitigating challenges at schools and in daily life.

This study will be conducted using two methods; collages and focus group discussions both lasting for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The participants will be informed that their participation will be voluntary, confidential and anonymous as codes will be used to avoid any potential harm. They will also be informed that their activities will be videotaped as for the researcher to get detailed information.

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on my email; 10101953lucy@gmail.com or Cell number; 58003609

Yours faithfully

Mapulane Cecilia Makatse

REFERENCE

DR Fumane Khanare (supervisor)

Senior Lecture and head of department in school of Education Studies

Email; KhanareFP@ufs.ac.za or Cell number; +27834321772

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM MOET



LERIBE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OFFICE.
P.O.BOX 12, LERIBE 300

27 August 2019

The Principal
Mount Royal HS
Leribe

Dear Principal

Subject: Request to collect data in your school

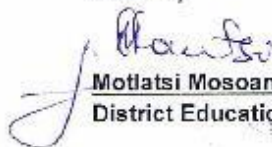
Mapulane Cecilia Makatse wishes to collect data in your school for her research study.

This research is mainly on: **"MITIGATING SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS THROUGH SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORK: CASE STUDY"**

The research is aimed to assist teachers teaching deaf learners with necessary skills and techniques.

Please assist her with necessary assistance within the bounds of MOET policies.

Sincerely


Motlatsi Mosoang (Mr)
District Education Manager-Leribe



TELEPHONE: 22400210/22401360

FAX: 22400022

APPENDIX D: CONSENT LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

P.O.BOX 93
LISEMENG II
LERIBE 300

6 OCTOBER 2020

THE PRINCIPAL
ST JOSEPH OF MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL
P.O.BOX 641
LERIBE 300

DEAR SIR/MADAM

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am Mapulane Cecilia Makatse, a specialist teacher and Sign- Language interpreter in Mount Royal High School and a student in the University of Free State, my student number 2017052982. I am doing Master's Degree in psychology of education on the "Mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners through school support networks: a case study" and kindly request permission to conduct my research at your school.

The reasons for choosing this school is because it is the only high school in our country accommodating Deaf learners and teaching them with their hearing counterparts in an inclusive setting and the main aim of my study is to explore how school support networks could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Furthermore, this study will add value in the following manner:

- Provide clear understanding of school support networks perceived to be available and how they can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

- Teachers will have to demonstrate their multilevel competency to improve quality of education and teach in Deaf-friendly way to create thriving people and flexible environment for everyone.
- Parental involvement in their children's education is important as to encourage them to use and develop their strengths.
- Community involvement is also needed for helping Deaf learners become compatible community members.
- Policy makers in the Ministry of Education and Training will have access to the findings and recommendations of the study and be considered in policies and reforms by including diverse voices including those of Deaf learners.
- Higher education institutions such as teacher training colleges and universities could benefit by teaching educators or teachers to recognise school support networks as a good approach towards mitigating challenges at school and in daily life.

This study will be conducted using two method; collages and focus group discussions, both lasting for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The participating learners will be informed that their participation is voluntary, confidential and anonymous as codes will be used to avoid any potential harm. They will also be informed that their activities will be videotaped as for the researcher to get detailed information.

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on Email; 10101953lucy@gmail.com or Cell number; 58003609

REFERENCE

Dr Fumane Khanare (supervisor)

Senior lecturer at the University of Free State

Email; KhanareFP@ufs.ac.za or Cell number; +27834321772

Yours Faithfully

Mapulane Cecilia Makatse

APPENDIX E: CONSENT LETTER TO THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

P.O.BOX 93
LISEMENG II
LERIBE 300

6 OCTOBER 2020

THE HOD OF SOCIAL-SCIENCES
ST. JOSEPH OF MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 641
LERIBE 300

DEAR SIR/MADAM

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am Mapulane Cecilia Makatse, a specialist teacher and Sign-Language interpreter in Mount Royal High School and a student in the University of Free State, my student number 2017052982. I am doing Masters Degree in psychology of education on the title **“Mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners through school support networks: a case study”** and kindly request permission to conduct my research at your school.

The reason for choosing this school is because it is the only high school in our country accommodating Deaf learners and teaching them with their hearing counterparts in an inclusive setting and the main aim of my study is to explore how school support networks could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Furthermore, this study will add value in the following manner:

- Provide clear understanding of school support networks perceived to be available and how they can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

- Teachers will have to demonstrate their multilevel competency to improve quality of education, teach in Deaf-friendly way to create thriving people and flexible environment for everyone.
- Parental involvement in their children's education is important as to encourage them to use and develop their strengths.
- Community involvement is also needed for helping Deaf learners become compatible community members.
- Policy makers in the Ministry of Education and Training will have access to the findings and recommendation of the study and be considered in policies and reforms by including diverse voices including those of Deaf learners.
- Higher education institutions such as teacher training colleges and universities could benefit by teaching educator or teachers to recognise school support networks as a good approach towards mitigating challenges at schools and in daily life.

This study will be conducted using two methods; collages and focus group discussions both lasting for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The participating learners will be informed that their participation is voluntary, confidential and anonymous as codes will be used to avoid any potential harm. They will also be informed that their activities will be videotaped as for the researcher to get detailed information.

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on Email; 10101953lucy@gmail.com or Cell number; 58003609

REFERENCE

Dr Fumane Khanare (supervisor)

Senior lecturer at the University of Free State

Email; KhanareFP@ufs.ac.za or Cell number; +27834321772

Yours Faithfully

Mapulane Cecilia Makatse

APPENDIX F: CONSENT LETTER TO THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

P.O.BOX 93
LISEMENG II
LERIBE 300

6 OCTOBER 2020

THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER
ST. JOSEPH OF MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL
P.O. BOX 641
LERIBE 300

DEAR SIR/MADAM

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

I am Mapulane Cecilia Makatse, a specialist teacher and a Sign Language interpreter at Mt Royal primary school and a student in the University of Free State, my student number 2017052982. I am doing a Master's Degree in psychology of education on the title **“Mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners through school support networks: a case study”** and kindly request your involvement in my research.

The reasons for being interested in your involvement is because you interact with Deaf learners daily and hopefully have a good relationship with them as you facilitate communication between them, their teachers and peers for effective communication. This will also help us have good communication during the activities of the research as the aim is to explore how school support networks could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Furthermore, this research will add value in the following manner:

- Provide a clear understanding of school support networks perceived to be available and how they can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.

- Teachers will have to demonstrate their multilevel competency to improve the quality of education, teach in a Deaf-friendly way to create thriving people and flexible environment for everyone.
- Parental involvement in their children's education is important to encourage them to use and develop their strengths.
- Community involvement is also needed for helping Deaf learners become compatible community members.
- Policy makers in the Ministry of Education and Training will have access to the findings and recommendations of the study and be considered in policies and reforms by including diverse voices including those of Deaf learners.
- Higher education institutions such as teacher training colleges and universities could benefit by teaching educators or teachers to recognize school support networks as a good approach towards mitigating challenges at schools and daily life.

The study will be conducted using two methods, collages and focus group discussions both lasting for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The participating learners will be informed that their participation is voluntary, confidential and anonymous as codes will be used to avoid any potential harm. They will also be informed that their activities will be videotaped as for the researcher to get detailed information.

For any further inquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on Email; 10101953lucy@gmail.com or Cell number; 58003609

REFERENCE

Dr Fumane Khanare (supervisor)

Senior lecturer at the University of Free State

Email; KhanareFP@ufs.ac.za or Cell number; +27834321772

Yours Faithfully

Mapulane Cecilia Makatse

APPENDIX G: INFORMED ASSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

P.O.BOX 93
LISEMENG II
LERIBE 300

6 OCTOBER 2020

MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL
P.O.BOX 641
LERIBE 300

THE LEARNER

INFORMED ASSENT LETTER

I am Mapulane Cecilia Makatse, a specialist teacher and Sign-Language interpreter in Mount Royal High School and a student in the University of Free State, my student number is 2017052982. I am doing Masters Degree in psychology of education on the title **“Mitigating school dropout among Deaf learners through school support networks: a case study”** and kindly request for your involvement in my research.

The reasons of being interested in your participation is because you are familiar with the inclusive school environment accommodating Deaf learners to be taught with their hearing counterparts and the aim of my study is to explore how to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners. Furthermore, the study will add value in the following manner:

- Provide clear understanding of school support networks perceived to be available and how they can be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners.
- Teachers will have to demonstrate their multilevel competency to improve quality of education, teach in Deaf-friendly way to create thriving people and flexible environment for everyone.
- Parental involvement in their children’s education is important as to encourage them to use and develop their strengths.

- Community involvement is also needed for helping Deaf learners become compatible community members.
- Policy makers in the Ministry of Education and Training will have access to the findings and recommendation of the study and be considered in policies and reforms by including diverse voices including those of Deaf learners.
- Higher education institutions such as teacher training colleges and universities could benefit by teaching educator or teachers to recognise school support networks as a good approach towards mitigating challenges at schools and in daily life.

This study will be conducted using two methods; collages and focus group discussions both lasting for 1 hour and 30 minutes. The participating learners will be informed that their participation is voluntary, confidential and anonymous as codes will be used to avoid any potential harm. They will also be informed that their activities will be videotaped as for the researcher to get detailed information.

For any further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on Email; 10101953lucy@gmail.com or Cell number; 58003609

REFERENCE

Dr Fumane Khanare (supervisor)

Senior lecturer at the University of Free State

Email; KhanareFP@ufs.ac.za or Cell number; +27834321772

Yours Faithfully

Mapulane Cecilia Makatse

APPENDIX H: TRINSCRIBED ASSENT LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS IN SIGN LANGUAGE

P.O.BOX 93
LISEMENG II
LERIBE 300

6 OCTOBER 2020

MOUNT ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL

P.O.BOX 641

LERIBE 300

THE LEARNER

INFORMED ASSENT LETTER

I Mapulane Cecilia Makatse, a specialist teacher and Sign Language interpreter Mount Royal High School and from University of Free State, student number my 2017052982. I doing Masters Degree psychology education, title “**school support networks dropout school mitigating: study case**” and permission request research my conduct, participation your.

Participation your reasons interested because familiar you learners Deaf school environment inclusive with hearing counterparts accommodation and aim study school support networks learners Deaf dropout school mitigate. Furthermore, value study add will manner following:

- . Understanding clear provide networks support school perceived available how used.
- . Multilevel competency demonstrate teachers have will quality education improve, Deaf-friendly way teach, people thriving create and everyone environment flexible for.
- . Their children’s education important parental involvement as encourage their strength used and develop.
- . Helping learners Deaf needed involvement community become members community compatible.

Ministry of Education and Training policy-makers have will findings and recommendations access policies considered reformed diverse voices including learners Deaf.

. Education higher institutions such as training teachers colleges and universities benefit could educators or teachers teaching networks recognise school support as approach good towards challenges mitigating school and life daily.

. Method two study conducted will, collages and focus discussion group lasting 1 hour and 30minutes. Participation your voluntary, confidential and anonymous informed will, as will codes used harm any potential avoid, video-taped activities will getting detailed researcher information.

Further any enquiries information concerning for request my, conduct please me on

Email; 10101953lucy@gmail.com

Cell number; 58003609

REFERENCE

Dr Fumane Khanare (supervisor)

Senior lecturer at the University of Free State

Email; KhanareFP@ufs.ac.za

Cell number; +27834321772

Yours Faithfully

Mapulane Cecilia Makatse

APPENDIX I: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TOOL



The purpose of this activity is to have discussion with nine (9) Deaf learners at a selected high school in Lesotho, engaging in discussions related to how school support networks could be used to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners at a selected high school in the Leribe district in Lesotho.

This 1 hour and 30minutes group discussions include the following activities:

- A) Welcoming participants
- B) Ground rules
- C) Questions to be asked

A) WELCOMING PARTICIPANTS

The researcher in 5 minutes, welcome the purposively selected participants in groups of discussion.

“Welcome dear participants and thank you for agreeing to join me to have discussions together about your understanding of school support networks, which ones you perceive to be available to mitigate school dropout among Deaf learners in Lesotho. My name is Mapulane Cecilia Makatse and I am with my assistant Justinah N. Palime. We are both studying in the University of Free States and she is with me to assist with video recording of your discussions”.

B) GROUND RULES

There are no wrong answers but rather differing points of view, so the researcher, further notify participants:

- To feel free to share their point of view even if it differs from what others has said.
- To keep in mind that the interest is in negative comments as much as positive, and at times the negative comments are most helpful.
- That they have probably noticed the video recorder that is used to record the session because there should be no miss of any comments is given.

- That names of participants won't be used in reports to ensure complete confidentiality, however, the reports will go to the University of Free State as part of my study.
- Their names are placed on name cards in front of their tables only to help us remember each other's name.

The participants introduce themselves following these prompt:

"Tell us about your name, the school you are attending and your grade".

C) QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED IN THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION – based on research questions

1. Firstly, I would like to know about your understanding of the school support networks and why do you think is important to reduce school dropout among Deaf learners?
 - (a) In your own words, what is your understanding of the following term 'school support networks'? You can also give examples in your answer.
 - (b) Why do you think the school support networks are important in relation to Deaf learners?
2. At this point I would like to hear about which school support networks are available in your school and how do they reduce dropout among Deaf learners?
 - (a) Which school support networks are available in your school? Give detailed examples.
 - (b) Do you think other Deaf learners know about the existing school support networks? Give clear reasons for your answer.
 - (c) In what ways do you think the available school support networks help Deaf learners from dropping out of the school?
3. At this point, I would like to hear about how you feel or think the school should do to improve the school support networks so that Deaf learners do not dropout of the school?
 - (a) Do you think the current school support networks in your school are enough to reduce dropout of Deaf learners in your school? Give clear reasons for your answer.

- (b) What do you think needs to be done in order to improve the current school support networks so that Deaf learners remain in school? Give a detailed explanation with examples.
 - (c) Do you think Deaf learners should be included in the decision-making relating to improving the current school support networks? Give reasons for your answer.
 - (d) How should they be involved?
4. On this last point, I would like to hear about things that make or do not make the school support networks to function properly for Deaf learners.
- (a) What are the things that you think make the school support networks to work properly for Deaf learners in your school? Probe: (What is being done and by who?)
 - (b) What are things that make it difficult for school support networks to work properly and reduce dropout among Deaf learners in your school? Probe: (What is being done and by who?)
 - (c) What do you think needs to be done to reduce things that affect the function of school support networks so that Deaf learners remain for the entire school period?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to add in relation to how the school can improve the school support networks and reduce the number of Deaf learners dropping out of the school in the Leribe district?

Thank you very much for your time and participation



APPENDIX J: COLLAGE CONSTRUCTION TOOL

The purpose of this session is to introduce the participants to a collage activity before inviting them to make their collages related to the research focus.

This 1 hour and 30 minutes collage activity involves the participation of nine (9) Deaf learners at a selected high school in the following sessions:

Phase1: Brief introduction of the collage

Phase 2: Set up for small group collage activity and distribute collage materials

Phase 3: Creating the collages

- Each group makes a collage together using pictures, drawings, words or symbols from the magazines provided.
- They are also encouraged to create their pictures, drawings or use own word to create their collages as well as brief notes on what they are trying to represent in the note pad provided.

The following prompt is used: **“Create a collage showing things that need to be done to improve the existing school support networks for Deaf learners”**

Phase 4: Sharing collages

The researcher gives instructions to the participating groups about sharing of collages made. Each group will take 10 minutes to present their collages following these questions:

- What is in your collage?
- In what ways can the materials/information on the collage be used to improve the existing school support networks?
- In what ways can the materials/information on the collage be used to reduce school dropout among Deaf learners?

Phase 5: Reflection on the collage (Written)

The purpose of this exercise is to allow the participants to reflect on the sessions they participated in mainly the collage.

They are given 10 minutes to reflect on their participation and the researcher as the facilitator could use the following prompt: **“Write down what comes to mind about your participation in the collage activity”**.

The following guidelines will also be used to initiate the participants' reflection:

- Write about today's session.
- Write about how you felt.
- Write about your experiences.
- Use 'I' or 'my' language, for example, “In today's session, I...”
- “Today I have experienced...”
- Please write in the language of your choice.

(Adapted from Khanare 2015:434)

Thank you very much for your participation.

APPENDX K: LANGUAGE EDITING

Michelle Woolley

WRITER EDITOR PROOFREADER TRANSLATOR

Bachelor of Library and Information Science: B.Bibl.
Reference & Research Librarian

Associate Member of Professional EDITORS' Guild (PEG)

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

This letter certifies that I have edited the detailed below.

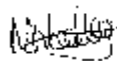
Title:

MITIGATING SCHOOL DROPOUT AMONG DEAF LEARNERS THROUGH
SCHOOL SUPPORT NETWORKS: CASE STUDY

Author:

'MAPULANE CECILIA MAKATSE
2017052982

Regards
Michelle Woolley



Date: 29/07/2021

michellewoolley12@gmail.com
083 298 2077

Professional
EDITORS
Guild

