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# THESIS SUBMISSION

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Title: **Exploring A Framework for The Holistic Well-Being of Orphaned Learners in Lesotho Secondary Schools**

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the **Doctoral** degree in **Philosophy in Community Psychology of Education** in the **Psychology of Education School of Education Studies** in the **Faculty of Education** at the University of the Free State.

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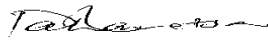
**Dr Patrick Mweli**

*Inspiring  
excellence,  
transforming  
lives through  
quality,  
impact, and  
care.*

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declares that this thesis, **EXPLORING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE HOLISTIC WELL-BEING OF ORPHANED LEARNERS IN LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOLS**, submitted in fulfilment of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** is my original and solely my own work, except where sources have been acknowledged. I also certify that this work has not been previously submitted at this institution or any other faculty.

I hereby cede copyright of this thesis in favour of the University of Free State.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tadana' followed by a flourish.

## **ABSTRACT**

The promotion of the well-being of orphaned learners is a contemporary issue and has gained momentum in recent years. The continued challenges of orphaned learners necessitate a change in strategies to address the overall challenges of learners and promote their holistic well-being. This study aims to explore the framework for holistic well-being of school-going orphans in Lesotho schools. A qualitative interpretive paradigm was used to explore the experiences of teachers and orphaned learners about a framework that could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools. The study employed theoretical triangulation of an asset-based theory and the ecological systems theory as a lens which focused and guided the study. Convenience sampling and purposive sampling were utilised to select the schools and participants of the study. The participants were five orphaned learners and five teachers from two secondary schools in Lesotho. Data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically. The findings of the research uncovered a number of issues. Poverty and a lack of academic resources and financial support, a lack of psychosocial support, feelings of sadness and depression were identified as some of the challenges that impede the holistic well-being and negatively affect academic performance. The study also revealed that holistic well-being encapsulates support in all aspects of life, such as the provision of life skills, the acquisition of learning resources and having basic needs met, self-acceptance, and a conducive environment. Lastly, the study identified the following strategies and structures for the facilitation of the holistic well-being of orphaned learners: the provision of counselling and psychosocial support, empowering the orphans' guardians to manage their unique situation, collaborative care and support between stakeholders, and academic support and mentorship.

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to my late father Takalimane Anthony Mahanetsa and my mother 'Mat'sooana Belina Mahanetsa for instilling in me the value of education. I also dedicate it to myself, for the sleepless nights, determination, passion and resilience throughout my academic journey.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABCD -	Asset Based Community Development
BEAM -	Basic Education Assistance Module
CGPU -	Child and Gender Protection Unit
CSTL -	Care and Support for Teaching and Learning
MoSD -	Ministry of Social Development
SGDs -	Sustainable Development Goals
SBST -	School Based Support
US -	United States

## ETHICAL CLEARANCE



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

Registration Number: REC-112922-058

26-Jun-2024

Dear Ms Tsooana Mahanetsa

#### Application Approved

Research Project Title:

**Exploring the framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools.**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2023/2503**

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 via an Amendment on RIMS to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit a Final Report on RIMS for your study/research project to the ethics office once the project has concluded. Should you require more time than the allotted 12 months to complete this research, please apply for an extension by submitting a Continuation/Report on RIMS. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Adri Du Plessis**

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

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## DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

To whom it may concern

This is to state that the PhD study titled EXPLORING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE HOLISTIC WELL-BEING OF ORPHANED LEARNERS IN LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOLS by Tsoana 'Mampitla Mahanetsa has been language edited by me, according to the tenets of academic discourse. The final responsibility for applying any proposed corrections lies with the authors.



Annamarie du Preez  
B.Bibl.; B.A. Hons. (English)  
0837641864

22-11-2024

## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The well-being of orphaned learners is a global concern that has led to a number of interventions worldwide. Statistics reveal that there are 147 million orphans globally (UNICEF, 2021). In most countries the Department of Social Development or Child Welfare is the main custodian of child welfare. The aim of child welfare systems is to care for children's psychosocial needs (Ramabu, 2020). According to Ramabu (2020), welfare systems developed over a long period in the global North, and they are usually guided by international instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is therefore vital to consider the role and influence of social development and child welfare systems in ensuring the well-being of orphans.

Orphanhood can have adverse consequences on children's psychological and physical well-being (Lai, Zhou, Xu, Li, Ji, Yang, Tang, Zhang, Jiang & Liu, 2022). The situation is worse for school-going orphans, as they are confronted with countless challenges that impede their general well-being and learning processes. This exerts a lot of pressure on child welfare systems worldwide. There is a notable deterioration in the child protection and welfare systems in the United States, Australia, Canada and United Kingdom due to the magnitude of orphanhood as a result of HIV and AIDS and the global COVID-19 pandemic (Herrenkohl, Scott, Higgins, Klika & Lonne, 2020).

In Kenya the state child welfare system also often lacks funding and the mandate to provide services (Karimi & Maingi, 2019). It is evident that HIV and AIDS led to an alarming increase in the number of orphaned and vulnerable learners (Nnama-Okechukwu & Erhumwunse, 2021; Hlojeng & Makura, 2020). The global COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation, and also negatively impacted the economy of countries globally. This posed a threat to existing child protection mechanisms, and adversely affected children's development and well-being (Chineka & Kurevakwesu, 2021). This has reinforced the need for a transformation in the strategies and approaches to address the challenges of orphaned learners, in order to attain the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to children as set out by the United Nations (Ngwacho, 2020; Herrenkohl *et al.*, 2020).

The well-being of children in a learning environment is crucial and cannot be ignored. Well-being encapsulates the effects of relationships, the environment and the pressure to succeed, both personally and academically (Kellock, 2020). Research has proved that healthy children who experience high levels of well-being are more compassionate, confident, supportive, creative and tolerant (Matheolane, 2023). Learning environments should be spaces that enhance children's well-being. Hlojeng and Makura (2020) maintain that "schools are therefore ideal places to promote orphaned learners' well-being, academic success and lifelong achievement". Alem (2020), Hlojeng and Makura (2020) and Ranthamane (2020) found that there is a correlation between learners' performance and their challenges. It is apparent that the well-being of learners plays an important role in their academic achievement, thus there is a need to promote the well-being of orphaned learners so that they can improve their academic performance. Some scholars have established that non-orphaned learners perform better in school than orphaned learners (Seth & Aji 2019; Ahamad, Mahnood, Batool, Ramza, Riaz, Suleman & Iqbal, 2023). It can therefore be contended that orphaned learners should be regarded as learners with special needs (Clerc, Khamzina & Desombre, 2022).

In Nigeria, child vulnerability is a developmental challenge that needs a multi-sectoral approach, because the plight of vulnerable children poses a serious challenge in the attainment of SDGs 1 - 5 (Nnama-Okechukwu & Erhumwunse, 2021). Motsa (2020) reveals that in Eswatini the challenges experienced by vulnerable children have been aggravated by the outbreak of COVID-19. These challenges cause a threat to the achievement of the SDGs as envisioned by the United Nations.

Education is recognised globally as fundamental for the realisation of the SDGs (Ngwacho, 2020), in particular to this study SDG 3, which seeks to ensure good health and well-being. Lesotho is no exception and is a signatory of numerous United Nations declarations on child welfare, including the welfare of vulnerable children. In an effort to ensure the protection, care and support of orphaned children, the government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), developed a number of policies and legal frameworks, including the National Strategic Plan on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, the Child and Protection Welfare Act of 2011, the Orphaned and Vulnerable Children Policy, the Child Protection Strategy and the Standards and

Guidelines of Care for Vulnerable Children. Despite this, the challenges of orphaned learners still persist.

In a study conducted by Matheolane (2023) it was found that the well-being of Basotho learners needs to be addressed considering all dimensions, including cognitive, social, psychological and physical. While there are a number of programmes that attempt to assist children, many orphans are either only minimally assisted, or even excluded (Moteuli, 2019:3), because their overall needs are not met. In Lesotho, the MoSD, established in 2012, is the responsible body for the welfare of children. It is mandated to provide an enabling environment in which orphans and vulnerable children are adequately cared for, and supported and protected in all spheres of life so that they may enjoy their rights and fulfil their responsibilities.

School-going orphans are faced with difficulties in getting the necessary support from society and stakeholders. They worry about clothes, food, school uniforms and other school expenses (Alem, 2020; Nnama-Okechukwu & Erhumwunse 2021). From the literature it is clear that interventions that take a holistic approach in addressing the challenges of orphans are more likely to achieve sustainable results that improve their holistic well-being (Senefeld & Perrin, 2014; Gana, Oladele, Anoje, Saleh, Khamofu, Torpey & Chabikuli, 2014; Matheolane, 2023). While there is an increase in literature regarding the well-being of orphans, there remains a paucity of research in Lesotho about a framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. This study seeks to bridge this gap in the literature, and aims to explore the framework for promoting the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho schools.

## **1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

My interest to pursue the study was prompted by both personal and scholarly dimensions. I have worked in the Lesotho Ministry of Police in the Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU), which specialises in child protection and all gender-related issues. I have learned that there are a lot of issues that affect children in all spheres of life, be it physically, emotionally or psychologically, particularly those who are of school-going age. My experience has taught me that on a daily basis children are confronted with various problems from home and in the school which ultimately impede their learning. Additionally, I have been part of collaborative programmes

aimed at safeguarding the rights of vulnerable children. The most recent was a programme comprising of different stakeholders including the Lesotho National Olympic Committee, teachers, and the CGPU of the police. The main purpose of the programme was to educate learners who participate in sports in selected schools about safeguarding them against abuse and sexual harassment in sports. During the deliberations with learners, some of them confirmed cases of abuse which had never been reported. They were equipped regarding preventive strategies and reporting mechanisms. I realised that some learners expressed their concerns of things that affected their sport performance, although many were uncomfortable to open up. When they were given a chance to speak out in a confidential setting, they made use of the opportunity to report about their problems at home. The question that one may justly ask is why, despite the many interventions from national and international stakeholders, learners and specifically orphaned learners still experience persistent challenges. This made me keen and interested to explore the experiences of these learners regarding their well-being.

Secondly, from a scholarly dimension, a lot of research has been done about the challenges faced by orphans and vulnerable children. Studies have proved that orphaned and vulnerable children are confronted with multifaceted challenges that impact their lives in all spheres of life (Alem, 2020; Chidakwa & Khanare, 2024). As the well-being of orphaned learners has lately gained momentum, literature suggests that sustainable learning and the holistic development of orphaned learners can be achieved through the collaboration and partnership of all concerned stakeholders (Mbambo, 2019; Okechukwu & Erhumwunse, 2021). The study by Moteuli (2019) in Lesotho showed that despite numerous efforts to help orphaned children, most of them are either minimally assisted or ignored altogether. It is evident from the body of research that there are some significant efforts dedicated to improve the well-being of orphaned learners. There is however scant research that focuses on exploring a framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. Despite the progress in providing support, there remains a serious gap in distribution of resources for overall well-being of orphans (Jaffer, Nassir & Ahmed, 2023). Aynsworth (2022) established that policies that are aimed at promoting children's well-being are seldom informed by children's actual needs and views when developing intervention programmes or exploring the understanding of well-being. Given the above, and due to the absence

of holistic programmes in addressing the challenges of orphaned learners, the researcher was curious to explore the framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools by engaging their experiences, challenges and strategies in depth, in order to promote their overall well-being.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The challenges faced by orphaned learners do not only impact their well-being, but has brought disruption in the educational systems of many countries (Motsa, 2021; Ngwacho, 2020). These challenges range from psychological to economic and social aspects, and affect learners' education and their lives in general (Alem, 2020; Oken, Ushie & Out, 2020). This remains the case, despite intervention policies and programmes by governments, NGOs, individuals and private organisations (Oken, Ushie & Out, 2020). Another concern is that these challenges hinder the attainment of orphaned learners' educational goals (Losioki, 2020).

According to Okechukwu and Erhumwunse (2021), children in Sub-Saharan Africa are confronted with a greater threat of losing parental care, resulting from factors such as poverty, insurgency, harmful traditional practices, domestic violence leading to breakups, lack of social protection measures and parental ill health due to HIV and AIDS, to mention a few. Alem (2020) concurs that orphaned and vulnerable children are struggling to acquire the necessary support they need from society and stakeholders, which make them worry about clothes, food, school uniforms and other school expenses. It is apparent that existing interventions do not contribute to the holistic development of orphans (Ranthamane, 2020) because their overall needs are still not met (Bimha & Sibiya, 2023).

Literature has proved that there is a link between the challenges of orphaned and vulnerable learners and their academic achievement (Alem, 2020; Hlojeng & Makura, 2020; Ranthamane, 2020). Interventions and programmes targeted at improving the lives of orphaned learners are often individually driven, and regulated by donor whims. Moreover, it seems the current support for orphaned learners is not adequate to enhance their academic achievement (Mayimole & Makhalemele, 2020), hindering their holistic well-being. Despite extensive research on the challenges of orphans and

how their well-being can be improved, there remains lack of research on how the well-being of orphaned learners can be improved holistically, leading to this study.

#### **1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study utilised theoretical triangulation. It drew from two theories, namely an asset-based theory of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), and Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1917-2005). Asset-based theory focuses on the needs, deficiencies and problems of communities, and on finding ways of addressing such problems (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006: 462). It emphasises the practice of dynamic partnerships, collaboration and participation (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001: 150). This theory is founded on the belief that all individuals, organisations, families and schools have the capacity, resources and skills to contribute to positive change. Kasonga (2019) describes that contrary to a needs-based approach model, an asset-based model empowers community members and solidifies the effectiveness of other stakeholders by drawing on the resources, abilities and insights of local residents in order to find means of overcoming their own problems. Kasonga further expounds that an asset-based theory has a solid internal focus, as it stresses the importance of intrinsic innovation, authority and control, meaning that operation development and problem solving should emanate from and be internally motivated. It is therefore considered the most sustainable method of community development.

Asset-based theory is relevant to this study as it could assist the researcher to use and unleash the available capabilities and resources of orphaned learners and teachers that could be utilised to enhance the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. It also positions every stakeholder responsible for the care of orphaned learners, including teachers and the orphaned learners themselves, as the assets that are responsible to harness resources and to come up with strategies and policies that are responsive to ensuring the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. Lastly, it allowed orphaned learners to provide constructs based on their lived experiences of how holistic well-being could be described from their own perspectives. It could further help them to suggest solutions for their own challenges from their own stories and lived experiences.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory conceptualises human development as a process of mutual relationships between developing individuals and the immediate context in which they develop (Anthony, 2022; Soyer, 2019). The proponents of this theory describe child development as being influenced by numerous environmental systems, ranging from the immediate family and friends, to broader societal and cultural influences. These systems include microsystems, meso-systems, exo-systems, macro-systems and chrono-systems. The ecological theory focuses on the relationships and interdependence between people and their physical environments. This emphasises collaboration, and implies that individuals need each other to survive and function properly. It is premised on the belief that positive, safe and healthy environments optimise developmental outcomes (Rus, Lee, Salas & Parris, 2020). Additionally, the proponents of this theory believe that individuals' behaviour is the end product of the interaction between the person and their environment, which can either affect them negatively or positively. In this study the interaction between all systems that provide care and support to orphaned children could assist in responding to the problems of orphaned learners in order to ensure their holistic well-being, as their development and well-being are affected by diverse challenges across a number of systems. This theory enabled the researcher to identify possible causes of the challenges experienced by orphaned learners, based on their interactions with systems and the environment.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.5.1 Main research question**

What framework could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools?

### **1.5.2 Secondary questions**

- What are the experiences of orphaned learners regarding their holistic well-being in Lesotho secondary schools?
- What are the challenges impeding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools?
- How is the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools interpreted and understood?
- What strategies and structures are available to facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools?

## **1.6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to explore and propose the framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools through understanding the perceptions of orphaned learners and teachers.

Research objectives:

- To explore the experiences of orphaned learners regarding their holistic well-being in Lesotho secondary schools.
- To identify the challenges that are impeding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools.
- To explore how the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools is interpreted and understood.
- To identify the strategies and structures that are available for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools.

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.7.1 Research Approach**

The study employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research has the natural setting as a direct source of data, while it is also concerned with lived experiences and real-life experiences (Muzari, Shava & Shonhiwa, 2022). Qualitative research aims to

provide specific understanding of a phenomenon, based on the specific experiences of individuals (Alharahsheh & Pius,2020). This approach enables the researcher to understand a particular social event or situation through continuous interaction. Qualitative research “focuses on making sense of a lived, observed phenomenon in a specific context with specifically selected individuals rather than attempting to generalise from a sample population” (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020: 141). It is appropriate because it aims to reveal the perspectives of the subjects on the research question (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). It also enables a researcher to identify issues from the study participants’ perspective, and to understand the interpretations and meaning they attach to events, behaviours and objects (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey,2020). In this study the focus is to explore and propose the framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools through understanding the experiences of teachers and orphaned learners. The approach assisted the researcher to gain an understanding of how learners perceive and respond to issues that affect them as school-going orphans.

### **1.7.2 Research Paradigm**

A paradigm represents researchers’ beliefs and values about the world and the way they interact with the environment (Kamal, 2019). It is the philosophical position of the researcher in which the researcher justifies how he/she views reality (Khatri, 2020). It establishes a researcher’s worldview and encompasses a summary of values, beliefs and ideas that shape how the researcher views and interprets the field and acts within it (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). An interpretive paradigm was used in this research, because it is a method that seeks to understand people’s lived experiences from the perspective of the people themselves, which is commonly known as the emic or inside perspective (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). The rationale for using this paradigm is because it relies on the deep understanding of the world in which people live (Rahi, 2017). This paradigm brings to the fore the lived experiences of the orphaned learners and their teachers about their holistic well-being, which could potentially lead to the establishment of a framework that will eventually promote their holistic well-being. This paradigm allowed the researcher to enter the participants’ lived world through personal interviews. It was therefore deemed appropriate for this study as it assisted the

researcher to understand the holistic well-being of orphaned learners based on the participants' own unique experiences.

### **1.7.3 Research Design**

The study employed a phenomenological design. Phenomenology focuses on the meaning that certain lived experiences hold for participants (Maree, 2017: 77). Maree (2017) states that the aim of this design is to determine what meaning a specific experience can hold for people who had the experience, and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. The premise of this design is that every individual is unique, and therefore individuals' lived experiences have to be examined because of their own subjective reality (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). In this study, this enabled the researcher to gain insight about teachers' and orphaned learners' views regarding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, because it attempted to understand the world through the direct experiencing of a specific phenomenon (Rose & Johnson, 2020, p.42).

## **1.8 DATA GENERATION**

Data collection is a very important stage in a research project. It refers to the process of gathering data from the research subjects. In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the research participants. An interview is a type of conversation between two or more people where questions are asked to gain information from the interviewee (Kakilla, 2021). Semi-structured interviews are an organised dialogue that is guided by new information as interactive discussions unfold (Ahlin, 2019). According to Belina (2022), semi-structured interviews allow the researcher the flexibility for spontaneous and detailed feedback from the participants. They further provide an opportunity for elaboration. Qualitative interviews have the advantage of being interactive and allowing for unanticipated topics to emerge during the interview process (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). The researcher was able to expand on the collected data by also recording all verbal and non-verbal responses such as body language, laughter and silence (Kakilla, 2021). This enabled the researcher to better understand the experiences and perceptions of teachers and

learners about the holistic well-being of orphaned learners through their behaviours and emotions.

## **1.9 SELECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

In research it is not possible to generate data from all individuals in a given population, it is therefore vital to select representatives of the entire potential population. This selection process is called sampling. Sampling is defined by Muzari, Shava & Shanhiwa (2022) as a process that provides a number of expected samples on a specific group. Isaac, Ezezi & Obilor (2023) explain sampling as an act, technique or process of selecting a suitable representative part of a population in order to determine characteristics or parameters of the entire population. In this specific study, a convenient sampling technique was used to select two secondary schools from which teachers and orphaned learners were purposively selected as research participants. Convenient sampling is a non-probability sampling method through which participants are selected based on their availability (Stratton, 2021). Convenient sampling, also termed accidental or opportunity sampling is a method in which a sample is selected from a part of the population that is readily available, close at hand and convenient (Isaac, Ezezi & Obilor, 2023). Purposive sampling was utilised to select 10 participants. These were five teachers who had experience of interacting with orphaned learners, and five orphaned learners. In school A, three teachers and two orphaned learners were selected, while in school B two teachers and three orphaned learners were selected. Johnson *et al.* (2020) define purposive sampling as the intentional selection of research participants to enrich the data obtained for answering the research question. This is a strategic approach to sampling in which information-rich participants are sought out in order to best address the research purpose and questions (Sukmawati, Salmia & Sudarmin, 2023, p.190). This technique helped the researcher to select teacher participants who were knowledgeable and experienced about orphaned learners' well-being through continuous interaction with them, as this aided the researcher to answer the research objective (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019). The researcher therefore selected orphaned learners, as well as informed and experienced teachers with five years' or more teaching experience who participated in the provision of care and support to orphaned learners.

## **1.10 DATA ANALYSIS**

The objective of data analysis is to understand the various constitutive parts of data by examining relationships between ideas and identifying patterns or trends to form themes (*Muzari et al., 2022*). In this study, the collected data were analysed through the use of thematic analysis as stated by Braun and Clark (2006), which consists of six steps. Thematic analysis, according to Kiger and Varpio (2020), is a method of describing data involving interpretation in the process of selecting codes and constructing themes. This method of data analysis is relevant in this study because of its flexibility in its applicability to several qualitative methods (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The collected data from the interviews were audio recorded after consent was obtained from the research participants, transcribed verbatim, coded, and categorised to form themes.

## **1.11 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Trustworthiness is the overall impression of quality related to the research process (Rose & Johnson, 2020). It denotes how well the researcher has carried out the study (Witell, Holmlund & Gustafsson, 2020). In order to prevent influence on and bias of the research findings, the researcher must take pro-active measures to preserve the credibility of a study (Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza, 2023). To guarantee the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher carefully and thoroughly followed and used the criteria as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, dependability confirmability, and transferability. The researcher also used member checking to ensure trustworthiness in the study by sharing a draft report of the collected data with the research participants (Rose & Johnson, 2020). A comprehensive explanation of the process of trustworthiness in this study is presented in Chapter 4.

## **1.12 VALUE OF RESEARCH**

This study could be of immense benefit to different categories of people. It is hoped that the study is beneficial in generating knowledge that will add to the existing literature regarding the perceptions of teachers and learners about a framework that could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary

schools. School-going orphans would benefit, as all the interventions aimed at improving their well-being could be geared towards addressing their overall needs in order to improve their holistic well-being, and by extension their academic performance. This could also be applicable to the entire community. The responsible Ministry of Social Development could utilise the findings of the study to formulate responsive guidelines and intervention programmes that could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. The relevant stakeholders would be equipped with an understanding of how to approach orphaned learners' multi-dimensional challenges in order to promote their holistic well-being. The study could also contribute valuable insights that can inform policies and interventions aimed at enhancing the overall well-being of orphans in Lesotho and beyond. Lastly it could assist legislators in the formulation of responsive policies that could facilitate the improvement of holistic well-being of orphaned learners and improved academic performance.

### **1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher is bound to observe ethical principles throughout the process of research. According to Johnson *et al.* (2020:141), ethical conduct refers to how moral principles and values form part of the research process. In this study, the researcher protected the dignity of the participants by ensuring that they remained free from any form of harm. The researcher applied for ethical clearance from the ethics committee of the University of Free State with approval number **UFS HSD2023/2503**. Approval was also sought from the Ministry of Education and the schools in Lesotho where data were collected. The researcher further sought informed consent from all the research participants after sharing information with them regarding the aims of the study. Permission was obtained from the parents/guardians concerning child participants in the study. The participants were all informed of their right to voluntary participation, and that they could withdraw from participating at any stage of the research process. The participants were again assured of the confidentiality of their information, and reminded that the audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews would be kept in a password-protected computer. Pseudonyms were used in this study to refer to the participants, and their true identities were masked.

The researcher had also negotiated with a counsellor to be on standby throughout the data generation process in order to mitigate any possible emotional distress that could occur during the data collection process, particularly when dealing with orphaned learners.

#### **1.14 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This research is specifically situated within community psychology in Education, which focuses on studying individuals and communities within their contexts, as well as the holistic development of a child. From the positive perspective, it is premised on the resources, assets and capabilities of the community. The study aimed to explore the framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools. The research was confined to two secondary schools in the Leribe district in a semi-rural context. The participants of the study were orphaned learners and teachers. In school A, the researcher selected two orphaned learners and three teachers, and in school B, three orphaned learners and two teachers were selected, for a total of five orphaned learners and five teachers. Embedded within the theoretical triangulation of both an asset-based theory and the ecological system theory, teachers and orphaned learners are seen as assets who are able to think of a solution to the challenges of orphaned learners due to their experience regarding the topic. Teachers are tasked with the duties of taking care of all learners, irrespective of their situation, and them in their physical, social and mental well-being. The ecological system theory is premised on the fact that human development is influenced by interrelated layers of systems within the environment with which an individual interacts. This suggests that orphaned learners are affected by various challenges as they interact with all the layers in their environment which affect them either negatively or positively. This enabled the researcher to establish possible causes of orphaned learners' challenges and come up with a responsive and sustainable framework to promote the holistic well-being of orphaned learners.

#### **1.15 DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS**

The following terms are defined operationally as used in the context of this study:

**Framework:** A framework is a supporting structure and a guideline of how something can be done or constructed.

**Holistic well-being:** Well-being in an educational setting is defined by Kellock (2020) as based on a child's subjective perspectives regarding their general experiences that may influence their personal and academic success. Holistic well-being comprises the overall health of an individual, which includes all aspects of a human life such as emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual well-being.

**Orphaned learners:** An orphan is a child who has lost a father or a mother or both parents. In the context of this study, orphaned learners are school-going children younger than 18 years who have lost one or both parent. Orphans in this study are categorised under orphaned and vulnerable children.

## **1.16 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS**

**CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION** This thesis is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 highlights the general orientation of the study and provides succinct background information and the problem statement. The rationale of the study states the research questions, defines key concepts, mentions the aims and objectives of the study, and explains the methodology used in the study. Other aspects presented in this chapter include quality assurance, value of research, ethical considerations, the delimitations of the study, and the layout of the chapters.

**CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW** This chapter provides a review of related literature on the holistic well-being of orphans in Lesotho schools. It begins by conceptualizing holistic wellbeing.

**CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK** This chapter presents an in-depth explanation of the theories engaged in the study, which are an asset-based and ecological system theories in relation to their importance in the proposed study. It illustrates the historical origin of these theories, principles and assumptions, their relevance in the study, the critique against them, and the link between asset-based theory and ecological system theory.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

Chapter 4 explicates the research design and methodology underpinning the proposed study in detail. These include the interpretive paradigm, qualitative research, phenomenology as research design, and the context of the study. It also includes information on sampling and data generation techniques, data analysis, and measures of trustworthiness. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the ethical considerations, procedures and processes followed to in this study.

**CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION** This chapter presented and discussed the findings from the data generated through the interviews.

**CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION** Chapter 6 presented the analysis and discussion of the findings and synthesis of literature.

## **CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter provided a summary of the study, highlight the significance of the study, and concluding with recommendations for further research.

### **1.17 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented an overview of the background of the study. It provided information on the rationale of the study, the problem statement, the aim and objectives, and information regarding the research design and the methodology. The chapter also mentioned other aspects such as data analysis, quality assurance, the value of the research, ethical considerations, the delimitations of the study, and the conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a comprehensive literature review on the exploration of a framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. It provides an overview of relevant scholarly research related to the topic under investigation. This was conducted on the following sub-topics: conceptualisation of well-being, holistic well-being of learners, orphanhood and learners' experience, the impact of orphanhood on academic achievement, factors affecting the well-being of orphaned learners, educational interventions and programmes for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, cultural and contextual considerations of Lesotho, and policies and advocacy for orphaned learners.

### **2.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF WELL- BEING**

Well-being has been defined differently by a number of authors. According to Aynsworth (2022, p.14) "well-being is more than the absence of illness and goes beyond life satisfaction". Aynsworth further explains that well-being is multi-dimensional, and includes physical health, life satisfaction, and positive feelings. It incorporates both individual psychological (hedonic and eudaimonic) and social dimensions. Dynamic in nature, it is also influenced by the socio-cultural context and ideas of well-being.

Dhaoui (2021) conceptualises well-being as an umbrella of subjective, objective, and psychological domains that interact together. According to the researcher, the subjective domain emphasises well-being as individuals' assessment of their lives, while the objective sphere is understood in terms of accessibility and the value of certain economic resources such as income, nutrition and safety. Psychological well-being emphasises people's contentment regarding their self-worth, and the direction they want to follow (Dhaoui, 2021).

Kyarusi (2020, p.1) describes well-being as "a holistic health condition that include all dimensions such as physical, social, spiritual and psychological aspects of an

individual's life". On the other hand, Kellock (2020) explains well-being as an effect of the environment, relationships and pressure to succeed both personally and academically. Well-being is identified as a multi-faceted phenomenon which includes physical, emotional and social well-being. It also incorporates future implications which can result in mental health issues, homelessness, unemployment and incarceration (Kellock, 2020). Kellock further advances that in an educational setting, well-being is "based on the children's subjective perspectives in relation to their overall experiences that may impact their personal and academic success (Kellock, 2020: p.223)". In light of the above, it is clear that well-being is holistic in nature, as it encompasses satisfying the needs of individuals in all aspects of their lives, inclusive of the social, psychological, spiritual and emotional aspects.

Psychosocial well-being is one of the key components of the general well-being of an individual, and is crucial for children's development and survival. It involves the psychological aspects of human experience relating to the broader experiences in which individuals live (Kyarusi, 2022). There are five domains of psychosocial well-being as outlined and defined by Yassin, Erasmus and Frantz (2021: p.141), namely psychological well-being, self-concept, self-esteem, social well-being, and emotional well-being.

Yassin *et al.* (2021) define psychological well-being as a multi-dimensional concept that centres on the mental health or state of an individual, and is developed through life experiences, personal identity, and emotional regulation. According to Yassin *et al.* (2021: p.141) psychosocial well-being encapsulates "the holistic functioning and well-being of a child, which encompasses the domain of psychological well-being, and includes social and emotional well-being, self-esteem and self-concept and future orientation, which reflects the thoughts, behaviour and an individual's reactions towards their environment".

Self-concept is another domain of psychosocial well-being which is related to self-esteem, which represents the affective or emotional aspect of the self or the way individuals value themselves. It denotes a multi-faceted system of learned attitudes, beliefs and opinions which are viewed as true by the individual about their personal existence. Social well-being refers to social inclusion, interpersonal relationships with

others and a sense of belonging, which make individuals mutually dependent on their social environment.

The last domain of psychosocial well-being is emotional well-being, which is related to psychological well-being, and denotes either a negative or positive effect. It can therefore be argued that in order for the holistic well-being of an individual to be fulfilled, the emphasis should not be on just one aspect. The focus should rather be tailored towards all the components of well-being inclusive of social well-being, self-concept, emotional well-being and psychological well-being.

### **2.2.1 Psychosocial support**

Research has proved that orphaned learners' challenges affect not only their physical life but their emotional and psychological aspects are drained. Ntuli, Mokgatle and Madiba (2020) revealed that orphans are susceptible to long-term psychosocial challenges such as depression, anger, anxiety and feelings of sadness. Psychosocial incorporates the psychological aspect of human experience in relation to the wider social experience in which the individual resides (Kyarusi, 2022). Kellock (2020) also notes that other challenges experienced by orphans include mental and emotional health and well-being issues, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, negative family relationships. Psychosocial support is based on the idea that a number of factors ascribed to people's psychological well-being involve all aspects of life such as biological, spiritual, emotional, cultural, social, mental and material aspects (Bimha, 2021). The purpose of psychosocial support is to help individuals to strengthen their ability to bounce back in times of difficulty, hence the study suggests a holistic learner-centred psychosocial support programmes for orphaned learners. In the context of the study, psychosocial support is viewed as a crucial kind of support that plays a vital role in holistic development of a human being. Thus it should be made compulsory in schools in order to promote orphaned learners overall well-being.

## **2.3 HOLISTIC WELL-BEING OF LEARNERS**

The escalating number of learners facing various challenges globally has resulted in the need to holistically care for such learners (Nowell, 2020). Kellock (2020) advances

that in any school context where educators play a role, children should be supported in order to develop positive well-being and cultivate essential skills that will enable them to function in the world. Kellock (2020) maintains that working towards the positive well-being of learners will enable them to flourish in all spheres of life, especially in their personal and academic lives. Positive well-being, as advanced by Mabunda (2022: p.50), “is about positive feelings and satisfaction about the factors in the school environment that are perceived to contribute to its enhancement”.

## **2.4 ORPHANHOOD AND ORPHANED LEARNERS’ EXPERIENCES**

Orphanhood is a persistent challenge in societies. It is ascribed to numerous factors including, poverty, crime, violence, natural disasters, and HIV and AIDS (Seth & Aji, 2019; Losioki, 2020; Kyarusi, 2022). Orphans experience stigmatisation and isolation, especially those orphaned by HIV and AIDS. According to Nnama-Okechukwu and Erhumwunse (2021), children in Sub-Saharan Africa are at a high risk of losing parents as a result of numerous factors such as poverty, insurgency, domestic violence, family break-ups, HIV and AIDS, discrimination and harmful traditional practices, and a lack of social protection. The death of one or both parents and the inability of the extended family to handle the situation adversely affect the welfare of such children (Lombe, Mabikke, Enelemah & Chu, 2019).

Orphans often find it difficult to adjust to their new reality, and may struggle with emotional disorders as a result of loss of parental support. The situation is worse for young orphans who may find it difficult to traverse complex challenges and emotions (Jaffer *at el.* 2023). For young orphans a lack of family support together with the grieving process can result in emotional distress and neglect of their well-being, which may hinder their educational pursuits. They experience notable deprivation specifically in regard to socialisation, education and access to nutrition as compared to non-orphaned children. A holistic and collaborative approach would therefore be appropriate to address the multifaceted challenges of orphaned learners. Orphaned learners in secondary schools have increased instances of low psychological well-being (Wambua, Mwanja & Newton, 2024).

Learners in secondary school are in their adolescence. Transitioning from childhood to adolescent brings its own challenges, because this phase of life is specifically characterised by a rapid physiological, emotional and social changes which can lead

to the deterioration of mental health, and feelings of disengagement and isolation (Dhaoui, 2021). Mokgathe and Madiba (2020) conducted a study in South Africa and revealed that orphaned youth face more adverse psychosocial challenges than non-orphaned youth, and the challenges are more intense for early school leavers. They live in a socially miserable environment where they are exposed to great poverty and hunger. The researchers further established that orphaned learners do not enjoy family support, and they often experience ill treatment from their relatives. As a result, they turn silent as a coping mechanism, and they often drop out of school (Mokgathe & Madiba, 2020).

South Africa is also faced with an ever-increasing problem of vulnerable children (Ntjana, 2023). The South African government has however taken various positive steps in response to the challenge with a set of legislation, policies and programmes to address the matter. Vulnerable learners in schools struggle to deal with the demands of academic work, and often repeat grades (Ntjana, 2023).

Research conducted done by Mayimole and Makhalemele (2020) in South Africa found that orphaned learners are in need of emotional and psychosocial support. They also need individual support regarding to their psychosocial, physical and emotional needs. Due of lack of surviving mechanisms available to them they are predisposed to crime and substance abuse. The researchers further established that a lack of support from relevant stakeholders like siblings, caregivers, teachers and private organisations contribute to poor academic performance. However, it has also been discovered that certain social support systems are effective in addressing the mental well-being and behavioural challenges amongst orphans, specifically those experiencing depression and behavioural problems (Mayimole & Makhalemele, 2020).

Orphanhood is considered to be a major factor for poor mental and physical health (Yendork, 2020). Orphaned children are faced with a multitude of issues which are beyond their control. They experience crime, financial problems, a lack of support and cyber bullying, which all have a major impact on their overall well-being (Kellock, 2020). Kellock further notes that other challenges experienced by orphans include mental and emotional health and well-being issues, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, negative family relationships, and abuse. Ntuli, Mokgatle and Madiba (2020) concur that orphans are susceptible to long-term psychosocial challenges such as

depression, anger, anxiety and feelings of sadness. Kyarusi (2022) adds that orphaned children are prone to various psychosocial challenges including loneliness, worries, sadness and other stressful experiences that impact their overall well-being and adversely threatened their mental health and their learning activities at school. It is clear that orphaned learners go through difficult circumstances which manifest at school and hinder their education.

Orphans have always looked to extended family and traditional support structures for care and support. This has changed over time due to disintegration of household structures as a result of the HIV and AIDS epidemic and other factors (Ntuli, Mokgatle & Madiba, 2020). Nonetheless, in some countries like Tanzania, support from extended families, the government and other stakeholders have contributed to equal levels of school enrolment and attendance among orphaned and non-orphaned children (Mwetulundila, 2019). In Ghana, some practices of remarriage and polygamy provide the opportunity for orphaned children to remain within their family settings where they are cared for by stepparents (Yendork, 2020). The situation differs from country to country, however, as some other countries have shown a significant improvement in addressing the plight of orphaned learners.

A study conducted by Lombe *et al.* (2019) argues that the labelling of orphaned and vulnerable children is likely to have a negative impact on their psychological and social state. They maintain that such labels may perpetuate the idea that orphaned and vulnerable are not like other children, thus limiting them to reach their full potential and capabilities. The researchers further assert that labelling influences the perception of such children and promotes stereotypes, as it weakens opportunities for self-actualisation and personal development. It is therefore necessary to reconsider the labelling of orphans so they can perceive themselves as normal children.

## **2.5 IMPACT OF ORPHANHOOD ON THE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNERS**

The education sector is confronted with significant challenges as a result of HIV and AIDS, particularly among the youth and adolescents (Letsie, 2020). According to Karimi (2019), education does not only form part of a social basis for lifelong learning, but it is also crucial for children's social integration and psychosocial well-being. It is

meant to develop and foster their personalities, talents and abilities (Dhaoui, 2021). It is an effective way to improve living standards and make people more independent (Rasidi & Mahmud, 2023). This implies that educating an orphan is as important as educating a non-orphaned child, if not more so. The researchers further posit that although orphaned learners do not have parents, they also have ambitions and interests like any other children. It is therefore vital not to turn a blind eye on the education of the school-going orphans. Schools need to understand and facilitate learners' holistic well-being.

It has been proved that orphanhood has detrimental effects on the education of children. The death of one or both parents may signify the end of a child's opportunity to education, because of the severe impact of psychosocial well-being on orphaned children's behavioural and emotional (Kyaruzi, 2022). This is exacerbated by discrimination experienced by orphaned learners (Alem, 2020). Kyaruzi further reveals that orphaned learners experience feelings of sadness and discomfort, which negatively affects their academic activities.

Children's loss of a parent or guardian may result in low motivation and poor academic achievement (Wambua, Mwanja & Newton, 2024). Clerc *et al* (2022) concur that the needs of orphaned learners in schools are multifaceted due to the consequences of parental loss which may impact the cognitive, behavioural and emotional aspects of their everyday psychological operations. They further mention that if the specific needs of orphaned learners are not appropriately addressed, such learners are likely to face more difficulties at school. They will eventually have a lower academic achievement due to sudden cognitive challenges in memory and attention, loss of interest in interpersonal relations with peers, and struggling to control their emotions and concentrating on school work. Orphaned learners should in fact be recognised as learners with special needs (Clerc *et al.*, 2022).

Regardless of the many interventions and assistance aimed at mitigating the plight of orphaned and vulnerable learners in terms of education, health care psychosocial support and legal protection, vulnerable children in countries like Kenya and Malaysia are still struggling. They continue to experience psychosocial, nutritional, health care and academic difficulties, and support to remains scarce compared to other demographic groups like people with disabilities (Karimi, 2019; Jaffer *et al.*, 2023).

Research has proved that there is a link between the challenges experienced by orphaned learners and their academic performance (Alem, 2020; Hlojeng & Makura, 2020; Ranthamane, 2020) because of the impact these challenges exert on the academic performance of orphaned and vulnerable learners. Orphans deserve quality education despite their status, although the challenges they face often hinder the attainment of their educational goals (Losioki, 2020). Losioki (2020) further states that orphanhood impacts on children's school enrolment, attendance and achievement because of limited resources to meet health care and food needs. They often lack self-confidence, which may lead to social isolation. Despite this they still deserve equal opportunities.

A lack of concentration due to parental loss may lead to poor academic achievement (Seth & Aji, 2019). In their study which explored the relationship between positive and negative affectivity and school well-being among orphaned and non-orphaned learners, Ahamad, Mahnood, Batool, Ramza, Riaz, Suleman and Iqbal (2023) established a high negative affectivity on orphaned children, while non-orphan learners scored higher on positive affectivity and school well-being. The researchers maintained that orphaned and no-orphaned learners differ regarding their academic performance and school well-being. This was due to their variances on negative and positive affectivity and other factors such as socio-economic conditions and lifestyle, to mention a few. The study posits that this could be due to the fact that individuals with high positive affectivity are active and energetic, while those with low affectivity are listless, unenergetic and isolated.

Parental loss has an extreme and long-term effects on psychological challenges among children as a result of their susceptibility to abuse, exploitation and lack of care from guardians (Kyarusi, 2022; Alem, 2020). Consequently, "they suffer from development of internalising depressive symptoms including emotional distress and prolonged stress" (Kyarusi, 2022: p.2). These may impede the ability of learners to concentrate and focus on their studies. Orphaned learners miss out on all the positive aspects that their parents used to provide, like love, care, protection, and of course the physical presence of their parents (Alem, 2020).

According to Seth and Aji (2019), non-orphaned learners perform better academically than orphans. This could be attributed to the challenges these learners are confronted

with, which affect their well-being. On the other hand, Karimi (2019) found that orphans and vulnerable learners who attend school consistently recover faster from trauma and are able to reclaim a sense of normalcy. In a sense the school environment could be a safe space for orphaned learners to heal and grow. A study conducted in Lesotho by Hlojeng and Makura (2022) revealed several factors influencing the underachievement of vulnerable learners in some Lesotho schools, including a shortage of teaching and learning resources, financial problems, teachers' attitudes towards vulnerable learners, administration and admission criteria, a lack of implementation of plans and policies, and absenteeism, among others.

## **2.6 FACTORS AFFECTING WELL-BEING OF ORPHANED LEARNERS**

In Southern Africa the issue of orphanhood is aggravated by challenges such as poverty, unemployment, inequality and domestic violence to mention a few. Although in most African countries there are common factors attributable to orphanhood, such as poverty and HIV and AIDS, each country has its unique causes of orphanhood. In Nigeria, for instance, people killed by Boko Haram attacks, natural disasters or female mutilation may lead to orphanhood (Nnama-Okechukwu & Erhumwunse, 2021). Kyarusi (2022) concurs that in most developing countries the prevalence of orphanhood is due to factors like disasters, wars and HIV and AIDS. It is evident that HIV and AIDS and poverty are the most common factors that may lead to orphanhood in African countries.

In the United Kingdom poverty is considered a serious problem that leads to a variety of negative issues that impact adversely on children and young people, such as a lack of resources and poor mental and physical health, which may result in a decline of academic outcomes and lower income (Kellock, 2020). In Zimbabwe as well, poverty is one of the stumbling blocks that hinder children from attaining their basic right to education, particularly orphaned learners. Poverty, according to Chinyoka (2017), is a condition of being unable to meet basic human needs. The HIV and AIDS pandemic and poverty have contributed significantly to increased orphanhood and vulnerability, not only in Zimbabwe but globally. Losioki (2020) and Mwetulundila (2019) share the same sentiments, and state that factors that impede access to education for orphaned learners are financial, social and material resources, to mention a few. The situation

adversely affects the holistic and sustainable development of orphaned and vulnerable children (Chinyoka, 2017), which may lead to academic failure and grade retention.

According to Yendork (2020), economic, social and political factors, gender inequality, maternal mortality and poor health and public services make it difficult for Ghanaians to sustain their close families and provide a helping hand to vulnerable people and societies. Motsa (2020) state that in Eswatini the major contributors to orphaned and vulnerable children are poverty, HIV and AIDS and the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated the situation and created inequalities regarding the academic achievement of vulnerable learners. Economic conditions and the disintegration of traditional family relationships force many children, particularly orphans and vulnerable children, to go to school hungry without knowing where their next meal will come from. This jeopardises their chances of receiving a meaningful education (Karimi, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic is no doubt one of the factors that has seriously affected the development of the youth regarding their bio-physiological, academic, social, psychological and religious development. This situation is worse for orphaned learners who are more at risk because of their diverse needs which necessitate intensified support (Malindi & Hay, 2023).

## **2.7 INTERVENTIONS AND PROGRAMMES FOR THE HOLISTIC WELL-BEING OF ORPHANED LEARNERS**

Traditionally schools have only been responsible for the academic achievement of learners, but due to educational and non-educational policy changes they are gradually entrusted with caring for other aspects regarding children (Dhaoui, 2021). Schools are also seen as learners' second homes, as learners spend so much time in school. Often the effects of children's vulnerability manifest in schools, so they are actually ideal places to support vulnerable children by promoting their well-being and academic success (Hlojeng & Makura, 2022). There are various school-based programmes aimed at promoting the well-being of vulnerable learners.

In Zimbabwe, Ringson (2020) mention that a Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was a good psychosocial support intervention, although it failed to fairly and

holistically provide all the basic needs of school-going orphaned and vulnerable children in rural societies. The author recommends the establishment of a joint support model for stakeholders regarding orphaned and vulnerable children. Such a holistic approach could provide in the material and psychosocial needs of school-going orphaned and vulnerable children. In Zimbabwe numerous interventions have been employed in this regard, including policy formulation and assistance regarding school fees and other material necessities. These are however usually limited to high-performing learners (Ringson, 2020).

In Eswatini the government, through the education sector, strengthened its efforts for the protection, care and support interventions of vulnerable children. This is done through the monitoring of vulnerable children in schools and providing the needed assistance to look after their needs (Motsa, 2020). Bimha and Sibiyi (2023) state that a multi-sectoral approach was implemented in Eswatini by educators as the key players who provide care and support to learners. Furthermore, Eswatini, like many African countries, is committed to a number of United Nations declarations and policies related to child protection. Motsa (2020), however, maintains that the country is struggling to protect its orphaned and vulnerable children, because there are some discrepancies between policies, practice and implementation. Aynsworth (2022) posits that policies intended to promote children's well-being are rarely informed by children's wishes.

In South Africa, schools are considered ideal places for Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) to offer psychosocial support to learners (Mothamaha, 2021). CSTL is a policy framework for education and training in South Africa. It identifies nine priority areas which influence learners' well-being, of which psychosocial support is one. It is aimed at providing holistic care and to learners. Mothamaha (2021) mentions that many children in South Africa are already poor, even without being orphans. The ultimate aim of the programme is therefore to enhance the entire spectrum of the physical and emotional well-being of learners.

Through the Department of Basic Education, the South African government has assigned all schools to create a structure whose responsibility is to identify orphans in schools, and coordinate programmes for the care and support of orphaned learners (Mayilmole & Makhalemele, 2020). Furthermore, the South African White Paper 6

policy document integrates the formation of the responsibilities of School-Based Support Teams (SBST), which monitor educators on the provision of care and support for orphaned learners.

In Kenya the government has established a multi-sector National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Committee, which is composed of the Ministries of Finance, Health and Education, as well as the AIDS Control Council. Its main purpose is to advise the government on matters relating to policy practice and implementation, and to monitor programmes to orphans and vulnerable children. This assistance to orphaned and vulnerable children has however not been sustainable (Karimi,2019). Through its National Education and Training Sector Policy of 2018, the government of Botswana developed a model of care and support called “Inqaba”, which has seven pillars (Bimha, 2021). These are psychosocial support, health, food and nutrition, protection and safety, water, sanitation and hygiene, HIV life skills, and gender and quality education. Moreover, in order to curb the increasing numbers of vulnerable children in Nigeria, family programmes are strengthened and empowered through education about children’s rights. Poor families are trained in entrepreneurship for income generating activities. However, most programmes and projects are implemented without the contribution of relevant stakeholders, which leads to the failed implementation of projects. It is therefore vital to involve concerned stakeholders in programme design, implementation and evaluation (Nnama-Okechukwu & Erhumwunse, 2021).

A study by Chidakwa and Khanare (2024) acknowledges that orphaned and vulnerable children are faced with numerous challenges despite the many intervention efforts in place. These challenges range from emotional loss, financial constraints and fragmented family structures. The researchers further reveal that the situation is worse in mainstream rural schools. They argue that existing interventions fail to address the complex issues facing orphans and vulnerable children. As a result, they believe that the ethno-psychological approach may not only address the unique problems of orphans and vulnerable children in mainstream rural schools, but also promote a holistic and culturally sensitive framework for support as well.

According to the researchers, ethno-psychology “is a collective approach that focuses on the needs of orphans and vulnerable children through the involvement of various

stakeholders". The approach is believed to have the potential to create a meaningful and sustainable transformative change in the lives and families of orphans and vulnerable children (Chidakwa & Khanare, 2024). It has however been observed that numerous programmes for orphaned and vulnerable learners are focused on their material rather than their non-material needs (Sitienei & Pillay, 2019). It is therefore key to ensure that orphaned learners receive holistic support towards improving their well-being.

## **2.8 CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL CONSIDERATIONS OF LESOTHO**

Lesotho, like other African countries, has a significant number of orphans. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the situation (Konyana & Matheolane, 2023). Studies conducted discovered that orphans are faced with considerable challenges which are to their detriment (Alem, 2020). These can be attributed to factors including HIV and AIDS, poverty, gender-based violence, sexual abuse and emotional insecurity (Letsie, 2020; Hojeng & Makura, 2020).

Letsie (2020) explored the influence of socio-demographic factors on school health and HIV programmes in Lesotho. She established that school-going adolescents are confronted with numerous challenges such as HIV, a high rate of ill health, premature deaths, orphanhood and early pregnancies. This aligns with Alem (2020), who postulates that the loss of a parent may lead to perilous behaviour in adolescents such as sexual exploitation and abuse. These pose a threat to the education sector, as it affects academic performance due to the emotional distress caused by these challenges.

In Lesotho the Ministry of Social Development conducted a situation analysis of orphans and other vulnerable children. This nation-wide project analysed issues affecting orphans and vulnerable children. It identified, among others, the services provided to orphans and vulnerable children, and emphasised the strengths, weaknesses and gaps related to services provision and highlighted various challenges and factors responsible for the outcome of the national response. This analysis gave birth to the National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children (April 2012 - March 2017), and consequently the National Standards and Guidelines for Care for Vulnerable Children (2014).

The main purpose for developing the National Standards stems from the belief that by implementing defined desirable standards and a minimum package of services, all concerned stakeholders, including civil society organisations in Lesotho, could put into operation the Standards at the local level in order to ensure and improve the quality-of-service delivery to orphans and vulnerable children. There is a shift in focus from orphans to children's vulnerability. In Lesotho, based on the argument that orphaned children are stigmatised. The researcher contends that the focus should be specifically on orphans rather than on vulnerability in general the care services, according to the Standards, comprise of education and training, access to health and sanitation, food and nutrition support, child and youth protection, psychosocial support, social protection, and shelter and care. These standards are holistic in nature; however, nothing is binding for the concerned stakeholders. Most aid organisations focus on one aspect, and not the full range of issues as stipulated in the Standards of care. As a result, orphans are still suffering ten years after these standards were crafted. One would have expected that the concerned ministry should establish a model for the smooth implementation of these standards that each organisation providing care should adhere to.

In Lesotho several stakeholders focus on the provision of care and support to orphans. These include governmental and non-governmental organisations focusing mainly on assistance with material needs. These orphans are however in need of support that is beyond the material things. It is therefore imperative to model all the programmes that are aimed at addressing the needs of the orphans in a manner that will address their needs holistically. For instance, Hlojeng and Makura (2020) reported on a case of an orphaned girl who was frequently sexually abused by her uncle. She was threatened and silenced by her grandmother because the uncle was the sole provider of basic needs. In light of the above case, it is apparent that orphaned learners are confronted with complicated challenges which are beyond material needs, emphasising the need for a holistic response.

The challenges faced by orphans are multi-faceted, and the situation is worse in rural mainstream schools due to discrimination and limited access to resources, among others (Chidakwa & Khanare, 2024). It is therefore crucial to be mindful of the support that is offered to orphaned learners to address their overall challenges. Some scholars have recommended and emphasised a multi-sectoral approach as the appropriate

strategy to mitigate the plight of orphaned learners. It can however be argued that such programmes could be multi-sectoral in nature but not holistic, hence the researcher believes that a holistic model for programmes targeting orphans has the potential to address the needs of orphaned learners in all aspects of their lives.

In Lesotho, several initiatives by the government and other stakeholders have been put in place in response to the challenges faced by orphans. To enhance the legal framework to support the psycho-social environment of the child, the government enacted the Education Act of 2010, the Child and Protection Welfare Act of 2011, and the Counter Domestic Violence Act of 2022, which is unfortunately not yet in operation. Child grant programmes have been implemented for secondary schools through the responsible Ministry of Social Development to curtail poverty and deprivation. Moreover, a Child and Gender Protection Unit (CGPU) in the police department has been established, whose main function is to enhance child protection, for abused, neglected and abandoned children. It can also offer referral services where necessary. Despite these efforts, the current provision of services, specifically to orphans, is still inadequate. It is therefore crucial to formulate a framework that could guarantee that the provision of services to orphaned learners are holistic in nature, to promote the well-being of these learners.

The Lesotho National Strategic Plan on Vulnerable Children 2012-2017 was formulated with the primary purpose of operationalising the Child Protection and Welfare Act of 2011, and to guide the national multi-sectoral and decentralised response to orphans. The Lesotho government adopted a multi-sectoral and decentralised approach, which is based on the recognition that the problems of orphaned and vulnerable children are complex and multi-dimensional, requiring an integrated approach. This was as the result of the government's appeal, through the strategic plan, which emphasises the involvement of all stakeholders as a national strategy in response to the challenges of orphaned and vulnerable children. Nevertheless, the researcher maintains that there is no clear guideline on how that could address the problems of orphaned children in all spheres of their lives, namely the encompass physical, psychological, social and emotional aspects. Rasidi and Mahmud (2023) emphasise the significance of moulding orphans towards a meaningful life and promotion of their well-being, but this should be made in a balanced way in all fields, specifically the academic field.

## **2.9 POLICIES AND ADVOCACY FOR ORPHANED LEARNERS' WELL-BEING**

Lesotho is a signatory of various United Nations declarations such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article, the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, and the Sustainable Development Goals (Chinyoka, 2017). The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2 emphasises the need to ensure healthy lives and to promote the well-being of children of all ages. The well-being of orphans is as important as the welfare of every other individual.

In Lesotho, the improved legal setting and focused operations have increased the capacity to identify and assist children in distress and protect their well-being by placing them in safe environments to avoid the risk of them being abused, exploited and neglected (Konyana & Matheolane, 2023). There are notable improvement efforts by the Lesotho government in partnership with other stakeholders to enhance the legal framework to protect and support orphaned and vulnerable children. As mentioned, Parliament enacted the Education Act of 2010, the Child Protection and Welfare Act of 2011, and the Counter Domestic Violence Act of 2022 in order to protect the rights of vulnerable children. A child grants programme has also been introduced to assist orphaned and vulnerable children to meet their daily needs through the help of the Ministry of Social Development.

Aynsworth (2022) state that policies meant to promote the well-being of children seldom incorporate the views, wishes and voices of such children in the formulation of interventions, or in exploring the understanding of their well-being.

Despite efforts by government and other stakeholders, literature reveals that there is currently a meagre provision of services, particularly to orphans, which exposes them to deficient child protection system, leaving orphans poor in a multitude of ways (Konyana and Matheolane, 2023).

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter reviewed literature related to the study. It provided a synopsis of the conceptualisation of the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, the impact of

orphanhood on academic achievement, factors affecting the well-being of orphaned learners, existing interventions and programmes for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, a cultural and contextual consideration of Lesotho, policies and advocacy for orphaned learners, and a conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 3 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter discussed literature related to the study. This chapter provides a synopsis of the theories and models in which the study is situated. The study utilised theoretical triangulation. Theoretical triangulation is the use of various theoretical orientations to understand the findings of research or to direct the study (Chugh, 2023). This study made use of two theories, namely the asset-based theory of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), and Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (1917-2005). This chapter provides an exposition of community psychology, the discipline within which this study is located, in terms of its relation and relevance to this study. The chapter further provides information on the origins, assumptions and principles, relevance and limitations of the two theories, and on how the two theories relate to one another.

### **3.2 COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY**

Community psychology is a sub-discipline in psychology of education. It encompasses the study of individuals and communities within their context. Its major aim is to address the societal challenges through provision and utilisation of resources and skills for improvement of community well-being by changing the characteristics within the communities that pose challenges to development of their lives. According to Harrell (2019) community psychology, examines human behaviour in their contexts such as ecological, social, cultural, environmental and historical. From the positive perspective, this study seeks to explore and propose the framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners' in Lesotho secondary schools. It focuses on the solution that could improve the lives of the school going orphans.

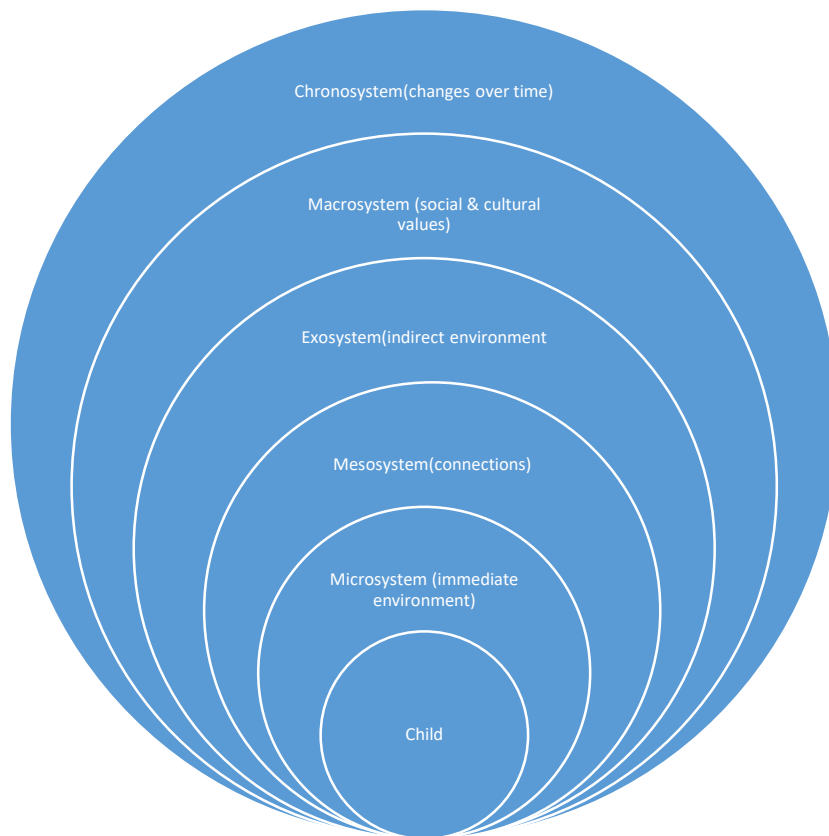
### **3.3 ECOLOGICAL SYSTYEM THEORY**

#### **3.3.1 Origin of the Ecological System Theory**

The ecological theory was founded by an influential Russian developmental psychologist, Uri Bronfenbrenner (1917 - 2005). He was known for developing the ecology of human development theory, which changed the way that researchers understood child development in relation to the environment (Soyer, 2019). As the proponent of the ecological theory, Bronfenbrenner created a new viewpoint on human development by integrating the context in which a child develops. He challenged the narrative that development is merely psychological. According to him, development comprises of four sources, namely culture, society, economy and politics.

Bronfenbrenner defines development as a lifelong process which reflects the individual's understanding of the environment and the individual's relation to it, as opposed to the traditional view which concentrates on the inheritance and characteristics of the individual (Soyer, 2019). For Bronfenbrenner, context and the individual are the two most important concepts. He named his process the individual context-time model, or the proximal process, which involves the daily activities and interactions in which developing individuals participate (Judge, Mercon-Vargas, Liang & Payir, 2017). They further emphasise that time is another component, which means that for one to study development, data collection should be done over time. All four elements function interpedently, meaning that one cannot trace the effects of the other without considering the others.

The image below shows the relationship between a developing child and the environment with which they interact, involving all levels of systems of the ecological system theory.



**Figure 3-1: The figure represents ecological system of Uri Bronfenbrenner 1917**

The ecological theory considers ecological conditions separate from interpersonal and genetic factors. It is conceptualised in terms of interconnected systems, which are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem. All of these should be considered together (Tanhan & Strack, 2020). The fundamental system in this model is the microsystem (Rus, Lee, Salas & Parris, 2020; Soyer, 2019). This is the innermost system, which includes the context where individuals interact. It constitutes the systematic activities, social norms and personal relationships of a developing person in direct contact with the setting (Mothamaha, 2021). Clerc *et al.* (2022) explain the microsystem as a planned organisation in which a child typically resides, such as the family, school, or the community. It includes family, peer groups, church and classroom. It is defined as bidirectional, meaning that both the individual and the environment develop together. It is the most intimate, innermost, powerful, dominant and strongest level of all the systems that constitute the environment. This

influences all aspect of development. An individual's behaviour is mostly learned (Rus *et al.*, 2020), and therefore an individual is the product of the microsystem.

The researchers further explain that the family is the centre for emotional development. As individuals develop, so does their range of emotions to include the influences of their environment. According to Soyer (2019), the microsystem comprises the relationship of the individual with the characters and materials in that system. It is nested in the mesosystem, which emphasises the relationships of two or more environments that the individual interacts with.

The second layer of the ecological model is the mesosystem. This system refers to the relationship between the microsystems. It can manifest as the interactive connection between a developing individual and members of a particular microsystem (Rus *et al.*, 2020). Xia, Lia and Tudge (2019) add that the mesosystem includes the microsystem and consists of the connections existing between two or more settings. Soyer (2019) concurs that the mesosystem is the relationship between an individual and their environment, and how this interaction affects the individual's development. The mesosystem comprises the relationship between two or more systems in which a developing individual actively participates, such as relationships at home, schools or with peer groups (Mothamaha, 2021).

The third contextual structure is the exosystem. The developing individuals are not situated in this setting, but those they interact with are (Xia *et al.*, 2019). The exosystem includes the microsystem. It encompasses all exterior systems such as educational structures and the community that influence the microsystem. The exosystem affects the experiences of developing individuals although it has no direct interaction with the developing person. It is the extension of the mesosystem, and influences people's social structures and provides a basis for the relationships of the developing individuals such as values, resources and settings regarding their interactions with the communities (Rus *et al.*, 2020).

The final structure is known as the macrosystem. It relates to the beliefs, values, practices, sense of identity and access to resources of a socio-cultural group (Xia *et al.*, 2019). Macrosystems influence the nature of all other systems (Rus *et al.*, 2020). According to Soyer (2019), the macrosystem accommodates all the other systems, and focuses on the relationship between the systems. Culture plays a crucial role in

the macrosystem, as it points to the consistencies among the settings in different cultures. The macrosystem relates to the beliefs, values, practices, access to resources and a sense of identity of socio-cultural groups. Here people are likely to occupy various cultural values such as their racial and ethnic identities, social class and religion (Xia *et al.*, 2019). Chronosystem was later added (Bronfenbrenner 1992), this layer reflects the temporal changes of all other systems and it helps individuals to understand human development as primarily dynamic and adaptive (Clerc *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, Rus *et al.* (2020) state that chronosystem considers the concept of individuals as dynamic over their lifespan and how the period they live influences their approach to their setting. It also includes the influence of chronological age and its impact on expectations and assumptions of development.

### **3.3.2 Assumptions of the Ecological System Theory**

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory conceptualises human development as a process of mutual relationships between developing individuals and the immediate context in which they develop (Anthony, 2022; Soyer, 2019). The ecological theory focuses on the relationships and interdependence between people and their physical environments. This theory conceptualises individuals' development as a process of bidirectional and mutual relationships between an evolving individual and those within their immediate setting. It encompasses the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Anthony, 2022). This model is premised on the idea that individuals exhibit unique behaviours in every environment they interact with by attributing social meaning. Every exceptional experience will therefore affect the observed conduct in a specific environment (Soyer, 2019).

According to this theory, behaviour is the end product of a learned activity in the environment with which the person interacts. The ecological model interprets human development as a process that includes various systems, each placing specific pressures on the development of a child (Clerc *et al.*, 2022). The proponents of this theory believe that environment plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviour of a developing person, as it is in the environment where individuals participate in activities, and each have their specific role in the environment. It can therefore be concluded that for one to understand human behaviour, it is fundamental to understand the

environment or setting where that individual resides. In the current study, it is impossible to separate the orphaned learners from the setting in which they are socialised, because some of their challenges are influenced by their immediate environments.

### **3.3.3 Relevance of the Ecological Systems Theory**

The study engaged Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory because the development of learners, with specific reference to orphaned learners, is influenced by and reflects numerous environmental systems such as family and school. All ecological systems play a vital role in influencing the development of orphaned learners either positively or negatively. If there is an interruption of one system, orphaned learners may lack the means to explore other ecological systems (Sitienei & Pillay, 2019). This model is relevant in this study as it assisted the researcher to holistically view and understand the well-being of orphaned learners. It believes that in order to understand the behaviour of an individual, one has to be familiar with the context with which that person interacts. This theory helped the researcher to understand the context of orphans' experiences in all aspects of life and also the interventions that could be put in place to facilitate their holistic well-being. It provided a clear relationship between different systems such as family, peers, schools and the communities with which children interact throughout their lifetime.

This model considers human development as being influenced by interrelated layers of systems in the environment. It explains that human challenges emanate from the complex interactions between psychological, social, economic, political and physical forces (Kasonga, 2019). It is crucial to understand the important role played by the environment in the problems of orphaned learners if we are to find sustainable solutions to their holistic well-being.

In this research orphans like other human beings, are part of the different systems of society like family, school, and the broader community including social, economic education legal and political organisations. All issues that are experienced by these orphaned learners in each system automatically affect their lives in all spheres such as their family, at school and the manner in which they relate with members of the community.

The theory aided the researcher in understanding how different systems contribute towards the development of an individual. In this study the focus is on school-going orphans who are at the secondary school. They are adolescents, which is a specifically difficult period characterised by rapid psychological, emotional and social change (Dhaoui, 2021). For this reason, it is fundamental for the researcher to understand human development and the various developmental stages that individuals go through, and how each stage influences their behaviour and experiences.

Similarly, the ecological systems model entails different levels of interaction which also shape the behaviour of a developing individual. The first layer is the microsystem encompassing the family, where a child is socialised through learning acceptable societal behaviour, norms and values. The circle becomes bigger as the child develops. As the circle expands, they are introduced to school environment at the mesosystem level, where they interact with teachers and other learners. This is where their behaviour learned in the previous level manifests. Their performance can be the result of either negative or positive behaviour that has been influenced by experiences within the family, and this may affect the school environment and activities, including the academic performance of orphaned learners. The more the child develops in a positive environment, the more their positive behaviour will be visible in their academic results at school, which is the second level of the ecological model. In the mesosystem level parents/guardians and teachers can interact and discuss their children, their academic performance and their peer relationships (Clerc *et al.*, 2022).

In the same way, from society children learn societal norms and what is expected of them by their society. This takes place in the exosystem. According to Chinyoka (2017: p. 259) development of orphaned and vulnerable children involves roles, relationships and patterns of daily activities that shape their cognitive, social, emotional moral and spiritual development. This means that children are exposed and affected by all levels of systems, which influence their well-being in all those aspects. Family relationships, challenges and economic conditions impact the performance of children at school. Similarly, societal norms and beliefs have an impact on the general well-being of an individual. This theory is therefore relevant to understand all the factors that affect children's holistic well-being, and to identify responsive and appropriate solutions to their challenges.

This theory is also a reflection of the importance of social interactions, meaning that individuals need each other for their survival and social functioning, and they influence each other equally in order to function properly. It is clear that schools and other stakeholders responsible for the well-being of orphaned learners should network, collaborate and share ideas in order to come up with sustainable solutions to the challenges facing orphaned learners, and promote their holistic well-being.

Schools are seen as organisational systems for the care and support of learners with vulnerabilities, particularly orphans. This is so because most orphans experience challenges that impact on their general well-being and lack of parental care. The impact of their experience's manifests at school, and they look to their teachers and peers for hope and schools as their safe spaces.

The belief exists that positive, safe and healthy environments are necessary for optimal developmental outcomes (Rus, Lee, Salas & Parris, 2020). In this study the expectation is that the interaction between all systems that provide care and support to orphaned learners could assist in responding to the problems they face, to ensure their holistic well-being. Orphaned learners' development and well-being are affected by diverse challenges across several systems, and if these could be mitigated it could lead to the promotion of their well-being.

### **3.4 ASSET-BASED THEORY**

#### **3.4.1 Origin of the Asset-Based Theory**

This theory originates from the community development work of Jody Kretzmann and John McKnight (1993), who found that a traditional needs-based approach, focusing on changing unsatisfactory approaches to interventions in communities in the United States, could be harmful (Romaine, 2023). Kretzmann and McKnight developed this approach in recognition that communities are not passive receivers of aid and services, but should be active participants, as they too have valuable assets and resources that can be tapped into to promote positive change (Omodan, 2023). It was developed in the United States (US) after the realisation that universities and other institutions focused exclusively on the needs and deficiencies of neighbourhoods with unemployed and economically distressed communities (Garcia, 2020; Ward, 2020).

The asset-based theory was established in response to traditional top-down development initiatives which focused on providing services to disadvantaged communities. The argument advanced by the proponents of this theory is that the needs-based model was destroying and disempowering social capital and promoting dependency (Maclure, (2022). As a result, Kretzmann and McKnight embarked on a four-year study that focused on residents and their assets, talents, capabilities and creativity. It is presented as a substitute to the traditional response to community issues, which leads to the disinvestment, pathologisation and professionalisation of social problems (Ward, 2021).

Kretzmann and McKnight started their work after deindustrialisation had resulted in enormous changes in US cities, leaving numerous people unemployed and societies economically devastated (Garcia, 2020). The idea was to focus on what was working rather than what was not working, with the hope that it could assist in promoting community development. The researchers believed that concentrating on the success stories of communities and their people, universities, non-profit organisations and philanthropic organisations could establish how they could support residents instead of providing them with the services they thought the residents needed. This way of thinking was named asset-based community development (Garcia, 2020).

The champions of this theory wanted to challenge the narrative of concentrating on the shortfalls of the residents. Instead, the focus shifted to the assets of communities and their people that could help them change their lives for the better. The asset-based community development model argues that needs-based approaches had long-standing negative consequences, which include affecting the participants' motivation and their capacity for creativeness, and a reduced sense of local power (Cunningham, Willets, Winterford & Foster, 2020).

Assets comprise diverse types of resources such as individual personal qualities, skills, associations, natural resources, physical assets, economic, and cultural and spiritual values (Cunningham *et al.*, 2020). Ward (2020) defines assets as encompassing the skills of people, the authority of local associations, the resources of public, private and non-profit organisations, the ecology of place and physical resources, the cultural places, and economic resources of local places.

### 3.4.2 Assumptions of the asset-based theory

The asset-based theory focuses on the needs, deficiencies and problems of communities, and on finding ways of addressing these problems (Ebersohn & Eloff, 2006: p. 462). It emphasises the practice of dynamic partnerships, collaboration and participation (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001: p. 150). This theory is founded on the belief that all individuals, organisations, families and schools have the capacity, resources and skills to contribute to positive change. According to Cassetti (2020), the asset-based approach is premised on a belief in the empowerment and development of local communities by identifying and connecting their resources and assets to allow them to make the best use of such resources for their own improvement. Additionally, this theory offers a solid replacement for the deficit mindset, meaning it is established on the basis that humans are not deficient, but that they exist in ecosystems which contains both assets and weaknesses. The theory focuses on relationships, existing local resources, strengths, and opportunities (Romaine, 2023). The primary goal of the asset-based community development approach is to promote a common citizen vision, and inventions through a process that combines resources, methods, functions and evaluation (McKnight & Russel, 2018).

Some of the principles of the asset-based approach, as outlined by Cunningham *et al.* (2020), are as follows:

1. Place-based: The community is the unit of focus and the source of assets and networks.
2. Assets-based: Asset-based community development (ABCD) starts with what exists in a community – the strengths and abilities of people. This focus is more likely to inspire change than focusing on needs and deficit.
3. Association-based informal and formal associations of people in the community bring leadership and drive the vision and action of ABCD-based initiatives.
4. Internal focus to development: community-driven rather than externally driven development allows people to work on the issues and projects they care about.

The above principles of Cunningham *et al.* (2022) highlight the significance of placing the community at the centre of development transformation in the community. The community and its people are the foundation of resources and relationships because

of the skills and experience inherent in every individual in the community. This is more likely to motivate people because they are included in deciding what they need. They further stress the importance of utilising locally available resources, considering people's strengths and capabilities. Lastly, they encourage internal-focused development to promote ownership and sustainable change.

In addition, contrary to a needs-based approach, this model empowers communities and strengthens the effectiveness of government institutions and non-governmental organisations by tapping into the assets, abilities and insights of local people to discover the ways of overcoming their own problems (Kasonga, 2019). Cunningham *et al.* (2020) adds that this model is motivating, compared to the needs-based approach, because it takes into account community priorities, and recognises their assets and capabilities. It assumes that problems can be addressed through the inclusion and participation of all community members, meaning that communities must be actively involved in tackling the power structures that cause their challenges (Maclure, 2022).

Omodan (2023) identifies and outlines four components or assumptions of an asset-based theory. The first is community engagement, which involves the active participation of communities in identifying their problems and finding solutions. It recognises that communities are best positioned to identify their own strengths, and to develop sustainable solutions. This model is believed to promote self-development and community empowerment, because communities take the lead and are in control of their own development.

The second component is asset mapping. This assumption entails the identification of communities' own needs, resources, and priorities by community members, in developing their own solutions. It is premised on the belief that communities possess unique assets and strengths which can be optimally utilised to promote a positive transformation. Asset mapping enables communities to work together in developing solutions to their problems, based on their existing assets. It promotes resilience and fosters self-reliance.

The third assumption is asset mobilisation. This component includes developing the existing skills, resources and knowledge that are essential to sustain a positive

change. This will lead to sustainable solutions designed to the specific needs and circumstances of communities.

The last assumption is capacity building. This assumption strongly emphasises the need for the community to be capacitated with relevant skills that will allow community members to promote a positive change and work collaboratively to develop sustainable solutions to their challenges. It shifts the focus away from external assistance and refocuses on developing internal resources and capabilities. Thus, to find a sustainable solution to any community problem, it is key to understand community assets.

The starting point of the asset-based theory is focusing on the assets currently available in an environment or community, and the capacities inherent to the individuals and the environment. It then builds on the already existing resources in the community and mobilises other stakeholders to work together and expand on those assets. It argues that communities can develop autonomously through leveraging their internal resources (Maclure, 2022). This model also reframes the role played by development practitioners and participants in development initiatives by calling for development practitioners to relinquish power and let the participants define their own development priorities in development programmes (Cunningham *et al.*, 2020). It can therefore be concluded that the asset-based theory places more emphasis on the assets and strengths that individuals within communities bring to the table to effect change in their lives.

The emphasis is therefore to think about the potential of communities and the ways in which this potential can be turned into opportunities. An asset-based approach does not ignore additional external resources, but it proposes that outside assets can be more effectively used if the community can identify and organise its own resource first (Kasonga, 2019). This theory does not disregard the problems and deficiencies faced by communities, but starts from what they have (Marron, 2020).

The asset-based theory is internally focused. It emphasises that development strategies should concentrate on the agenda-building and problem-solving capacities of the residents. It shifts the focus from problem-solving to building the assets of the community (Marron, 2020). The internal focus stresses the importance of local definition, creativity and empowerment, and relating these with inherent knowledge

systems (Kasonga, 2019). The researcher further emphasises that the strength of an asset-based approach lies in the ability to consider the capacity of the local people. It draws the attention to social assets and individual talents that build powerful communities. Marron (2020) acknowledges that each community boasts an exceptional combination of resources upon which they can build its future. Gracia (2020) shares the same thought, that it is better to begin the process of development from within the community, that is from inside out, for them to invest their gifts and skills in the process. The asset-based theory considers the assets of the local people as the basis for sustainable development and, of course, as the solution to their challenges.

Kasonga (2019) advances that an asset-based community development approach is also called the “half-full glass” approach, which, according to Garcia (2020), Kretzmann and McKnight conceptualised as a route dedicated to exploring new opportunities and realising communities’ capabilities and assets. This is counter to the traditional “half-empty glass” approach, which concentrates on the needs and deficiencies of communities. This model does not disregard the existence of challenges within communities, or the urgent need to address them, but it argues that an asset-based approach to intervention begins with the status quo (Kasonga, 2019).

### **3.4.3 Relevance of the asset-based theory**

The key relevance of the asset-based theory to this study is that it is premised on the principle that every individual possesses unique assets, talents, capabilities and skills (Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) which can be utilised to bring about a positive change. It is relevant to this study as it assisted the researcher to use and unleash the available capabilities and resources of orphaned learners and teachers to enhance the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. It could use their unique experiences as a foundation to bring ideas and solutions to their challenges. This model also positions every stakeholder responsible for the care of orphaned learners, including teachers and the orphaned learners themselves, as the assets that are responsible to harness resources and to come up with strategies and policies that will ensure the holistic well-being of orphaned learners.

The asset-based theory offers a solid replacement for the deficit mindset, meaning that it shifts from deficit thinking, and concentrates on relationships, existing local resources, strengths, and opportunities (Romaine, 2023). This implies that orphaned learners should not be seen as having deficits and challenges. Rather, their minds should be considered as assets which can come up with ideas and solutions to their problems, as they should conceptualise holistic well-being based their own experiences. When documenting mental health result of orphans, particularly HIV and AIDS orphans, studies usually depended largely on deficit models (Lai *et al.*, 2022). It is therefore crucial to shift the focus from the challenges that orphaned learners are confronted with, to solutions that can be employed to promote the overall well-being of orphaned learners.

It has earlier been mentioned that the asset-based theory concentrates on the assets and strengths of individuals. Lai *et al.* (2022) identified some assets that orphaned learners may possess which can be tapped and turned into opportunities. These are school connectedness, peer support, and resilience. The researchers define school connectedness as students' perceptions about their personal acceptance, support and inclusion in their school environment Peer support is the mutual transmission of emotional and practical support, such as sharing information and teaching and learning life skills and connecting people with resources and available opportunities among a network of peers and friends. Resilience is considered as an internal development asset that intercedes the relationship between school connectedness, peer support and subjective well-being. It is explained as a leading internal development asset and personal strength that plays a vital role in recuperation and maintaining proper functioning. It is an adaptive system during times of trauma, tragedy and other challenging life experiences.

The support and care of orphaned learners can only be sustainable if it begins with what the community have. This is in line with what Marron (2020) acknowledges - that each community boasts an exceptional combination of resources upon which it can build its future. Schools, teachers, and orphaned learners are assets which are locally available for utilisation in finding a solution to their challenges. This principle does not disregard the external constraints of the communities, and the problems and deficiencies that communities face, but it stresses that despite these challenges, the communities still possess capabilities, skills and experience. These should be

supported to find sustainable solutions, so that orphans can define holistic well-being based on their own unique experiences. It will also allow them to come up with solutions to address their problems.

In light of the above, it is clear that orphaned learners and teachers have the power to change their situation by being actively involved in issues that affect them, and building on already existing resources rather than waiting for outsiders to provide solutions, which might not answer to their holistic needs.

#### **3.4.4 Critique of the Asset-based Theory and Ecological System theory**

This model is often criticised for leaving traditional leaders in communities unchallenged and advantaged (Cunningham *et al.*, 2020). Asset-based theory is also criticised for strengthening the argument for cuts to public services that provide necessary facilities and the stability of relationships (Ward, 2021). Ecological system theory also has its own limitations, in recent developments of the theory Bronfenbrenner's focus has shifted from ecology to bio-ecology, which implies that individuals are influenced by their environment and again their personal characteristics are significant particularly through the interactions between the individuals and other influencers in each level of the system.

#### **3.4.5 The link between the Asset-based theory and the Ecological Systems Theory**

There is a logical link between the asset-based theory and the ecological systems theory. The ecological systems theory explains that human challenges result from the complex interaction of psychological, social, economic, political and physical forces. It takes cognisance of the transactional relationship between ecological conditions and human conditions. It reflects the importance of social relationships and the need to work together for individuals' survival. Likewise, the asset-based principle promotes inclusion, as it recognises the significance of every individual in the community as a resource for addressing its challenges. In this study all concerned stakeholders are positioned as problem solvers with capabilities and skills that could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with theoretical framework underpinning the study. It engaged both asset-based theory of Kretzmann and McKnight and Uri Bronfenbrenners ecological system theory. It explained community psychology, outlined the origins of the theories, assumptions and principles and their relevance to the study, limitations of the theories and how both theories relate to one another. Lastly the conclusion was provided.

## **CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a detailed description of the steps and actions taken to conduct the study on exploring a framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools. It provides a clear methodological explanation of the choice of approaches and methods employed in this study, and the rationale for utilising specific procedures and techniques, including the analysis of information in order to understand the phenomenon under study.

### **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.2.1 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Research methodology involves the general research plan that is followed to conduct research (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Verma, Verma and Abhishek (2024) describe research methodology as a detailed overview of a wide range of research paradigms and methodologies, with their ontological and epistemological foundations and associated procedures and techniques. The study employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research allows the researcher to study people's experiences in detail through employing specific research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups discussions, observations, content analysis visual methods and biographies or life histories (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2020). They further state that qualitative research assists the researcher to understand problems from the perspective of the research participants and understand the interpretations and meanings they attach to events, behaviours and objects. Qualitative research "focuses on making sense of a lived, observed phenomenon in a specific context with specifically selected individuals rather than attempting to generalise from a sample population" (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020: p.141). According to Muzari, Shava and Shonhiwa (2022), a qualitative approach allows data collection through detailed engagement with the participants in a study. It utilises human physical senses to understand how issues are interpreted and described. Qualitative research is flexible, as it allows the researcher to engage in a cyclical data collection process and data analysis. Additionally, qualitative

research aids the researcher to understand the meaning of social phenomena within the research participants' setting (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019).

This approach enables a researcher to understand a particular social event or situation through continuous interaction. In this case the researcher could better understand the experiences of orphaned learners and teachers regarding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. It is appropriate because it aims to reveal the perspectives of the subjects regarding the research question (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). It allows the researcher to study participants in their natural settings, to establish how their behaviours and experiences are moulded by the background of their lives, such as the economic, social, cultural and physical contexts in which they reside (Hennink *et al.*, 2020). In this study the focus is to understand the perceptions of teachers on how they respond to issues affecting orphaned learners' holistic well-being, and the perceptions and experiences of orphaned learners themselves about their situation. The qualitative approach with its ability to generate and extract detailed, rich and thick descriptions based on the views of participants (Muzari *et al.*, 2022), aided the researcher to gain an understanding of how learners perceive and respond to issues that affect them as school-going orphans.

#### **4.2.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A paradigm represents researchers' beliefs and values about the world and the way they interact with the environment (Kamal, 2019). It is the philosophical position of the researcher in which the researcher justifies how they view reality (Khatri, 2020). Khatri (2020) further elaborates that a paradigm is the lens through which the researcher examines the methodological aspect of their research work, based on specific philosophical foundations. The choice of paradigm is influenced by the research and the position the researcher holds in their research (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). An interpretive paradigm was used in this study. Hennink *et al.* (2020) define the interpretive paradigm as an approach that aims to understand people's lived experiences from their own perspective. It acknowledges that "people's perceptions and experiences of reality are subjective, therefore there can be multiple perspectives on reality (Hennink *et al.*, 2020: p.15)". According to Kumatongo and Muzata (2021), the interpretive paradigm is founded on the idea that reality is a way that individuals

interpret what they have seen or experienced. It is about a detailed description of a phenomenon with all its well identified, described and interpreted variables. It relies on the deep understanding of the world in which people live (Rahi, 2017).

The interpretive paradigm was deemed suitable for this study, because the researcher attempted to develop the participants' constructs by in-depth examination of the phenomenon of interest from the field (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) state that the interpretive paradigm enables the researcher to explore detailed individual experiences rather than considering a generalised measurement of expectations. This paradigm brings to the fore the lived experiences of orphaned learners and teachers about holistic well-being, which may potentially lead to the establishment of a framework that will eventually promote their holistic well-being. This assisted the researcher to understand the meaning the participants attach to their experiences about the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, based on their own unique experiences.

#### **4.2.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design is defined as a comprehensive plan of the sequence of processes that a researcher aims to follow in order to achieve the desired study objectives (Verma, Verma & Abhishek, 2024). This study utilised a phenomenological design. Phenomenology focuses on the meaning that certain lived experiences hold for participants (Maree, 2017: p. 77). Maree (2017) states that the aim of this design is to understand what an experience means for people who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) acknowledge that phenomenology aims to understand the world through the direct experiencing of phenomena. It is therefore clear that the goal of phenomenology is to describe the lived experiences of the participants. The premise of this design is that every individual is unique, and so an individual's lived situation has to be examined because of their own subjective reality (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). This implies that in phenomenology, the reality of a phenomenon is described from the viewpoint of a person describing or experiencing it. In this study, phenomenology as a design was relevant and helpful because it allowed the researcher to gain insight about teachers' and orphaned learners' lived experiences with regard to the holistic well-being of

orphaned learners, as it seeks to understand the world through the direct experiencing of phenomena (Rose & Johnson, 2020: p. 42; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

### **4.3 DATA GENERATION**

Qualitative research positions the researcher as the primary data generation instrument, which provides a sense of personal commitment by the researcher to the phenomena, which adds to the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). In this research project, interviews were used as a technique to collect data from the research participants. An interview is a method which generates data through direct verbal communication between individuals in order to solicit information from the interviewees in their natural context (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the participants. Semi-structured interviews are an organised dialogue that is guided by new information as interactive discussions unfold (Ahlin, 2019).

According to Belina (2022), semi-structured interviews allow the researcher the flexibility for spontaneous and detailed feedback from the participants. Muzari *et al.* (2022) add that semi-structured interview encompasses a sequence of open-ended questions established on a particular topic that the researcher wants to cover. Kakilla (2021) concurs that the researcher can immediately follow up on any verbal or non-verbal signals, such as stammering or silence. Its flexibility assisted the researcher to introduce new questions during the interview because of what the interviewees said (Rasak, Alhabsy & Syam, 2022). The researcher could rephrase and restructure questions in any order to answer the research questions.

The rationale for using semi-structured interviews was because of their ability to provide the interviewer the opportunity to resort to cues and prompts to encourage participants who cannot express themselves properly (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). Interviews are usually conducted using an interview guide, which is a research instrument tool developed by the researcher. It comprises of a set of questions used to collect participants' opinions (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). In this study, the interview was guided by the use of an interview schedule, and questions pertaining to a framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools were asked. All

the questions were designed to address the research questions. Semi-structured interviews were relevant in this study because they assisted the researcher to collect detailed stories of the participants' experiences and contextual understanding of what holistic well-being entails. This helped the researcher to understand their experiences and perceptions about the holistic well-being of orphaned learners through verbal and non-verbal gestures that manifested during the interviews. The researcher was able to observe the emotions of the participants during the interview.

#### **4.4 POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The population of a study involves the entire group about whom conclusions are to be drawn (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). It encompasses a group of people or entities that the research is focusing on, and comprises of individuals, pairs, groups, organisations or other similar entities. It defines the study's clues about the setting and provides an opportunity to concentrate on particular areas within a prearranged scope (Hossan, Mansor & Jaharuddin, 2023). Sukmawati, Salmia and Sudarmin (2023) add that a population entails all the people who has information about the phenomenon under study. Ahmad, Alias and Razak (2023) affirm that the population of a study refers to the whole group of people, objects, or events that share certain common characteristics relevant to the study. It is therefore important to define a population in terms of geographical area, age, income and other features (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). It can therefore be concluded that population in research means a targeted group on which the researcher intends to conduct the study on, based on common characteristics. For this study, the population includes all the students and teachers of the selected secondary schools, while the target population comprises all orphaned learners, and teachers that interact with orphaned learners, in both schools.

#### **4.5 SELECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

In research it is impossible to collect data from all individuals in each population. It is therefore necessary to select a representative sample of the entire population, a process termed sampling. Sampling is defined by Muzari *et al.* (2022) as the process that provides several expected participants regarding a specific group. According to

Isaac, Ezezi and Obilor (2023), sampling is an act, technique or process of selecting a suitable representative portion of a population to determine certain characteristics or parameters of the entire population. To select the sample, the researcher utilised convenience and purposive sampling respectively to select two secondary schools and research participants. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method through which participants are selected based on their availability (Stratton, 2021). Muzari *et al.* (2022) state that convenience sampling encompasses the selection of research participants who are convenient to find, according to the researcher. It uses the most accessible study participants (Johnson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020).

Purposive sampling was also engaged to select 10 participants. In school A, two orphaned learners and three teachers who had experience of interacting with orphaned learners, were selected. In school B, three orphaned learners and two teachers were selected. In total, five teachers and five orphaned learners were selected. Johnson *et al.* (2020) defines purposive sampling as the intentional selection of research participants to enrich the data obtained for answering the research question. Purposive sampling is a cost-effective sampling technique through which a researcher depends on their expertise to select a sample that is suitable for the study, and to eliminate other irrelevant members of the population (Obilor, 2023).

The rationale for the choice of sampling techniques was that the researcher selected participants who were knowledgeable and experienced about orphaned learners' well-being, as this aided the researcher to answer the research objective (Shaheen & Pradhan, 2019). In this study the researcher collected information from knowledgeable participants, which meant that the collected data were applicable to the research context ((Obilor, 2023). Additionally, the schools where data were collected were conveniently selected, as they are located near the researcher's residence. This enabled the researcher to easily access the research sites. The researcher selected informed and experienced teachers with five years' or more teaching experience, who participated in the provision of care and support to orphaned learners, and orphaned learners themselves.

**Table 4.1: The demographic characteristics of the research participants (Learners)**

s/n	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Single/double orphan	Grade	School
1	Anna	Female	15	Single	10	A
2	David	Male	15	Double	9	A
3	Adeline	Female	16	Single	10	B
4	Robert	Male	17	Single	9	B
5	Alina	Female	17	Double	10	B

**Table 4.2: Demographic characteristics of the research participants (Teachers):**

s/n	Pseudonym	Gender	Years of School Experience	School
1	Richard	Male	5	A
2	Raymond	Male	5	A
3	Prudence	Female	15	A
4	Peter	Male	13	B
5	Lizzy	Female	8	B

#### **4.6 RESEARCH SITE**

The study was conducted in two schools in the Leribe District. Leribe District is one of the ten districts of Lesotho in the Northern Region. The research site is 17 kilometres from Hlotse township. The two secondary schools were conveniently selected because they were easily accessible to the researcher. These schools are in the semi-rural locations. School A has an overall student population of 455 from Grade 8 to 11, while school B has 122 students from Grade 8 to 11. The research site was chosen because of its convenience accessibility to where the researcher resides.

#### **4.7 DATA GENERATION PROCESS**

After obtaining ethical clearance in June 2024, the researcher went to school A in August 2024 to meet with the principal, introduce herself and request permission to collect data at the school. The researcher explained the purpose of the research, and the criteria for selecting the research participants. The principal was asked to identify potential participants. Later that month the researcher visited school B, to become familiar with the research site and to meet with the principal of the school. The researcher introduced herself as a PhD student at the University of the Free State, and explained the purpose of the research and the criteria for the selection of participants. The researcher asked the principal to identify possible research participants.

In preparation for data collection process, the researcher phoned the principal of school B in September 2024 to remind her of the request and to book appointments. The researcher visited school B again later that month for data collection. The principal provided one classroom as an interview room, and the identified learner participants presented their consent forms, signed by guardians or parents. The researcher introduced herself to the participants and explained that participation in the study was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any stage. All the participants from that school were interviewed on that day. The interviews did not last for more than an hour. During the interviews one orphaned learner, a double orphan, was emotionally triggered, and the researcher scheduled an appointment with a counsellor.

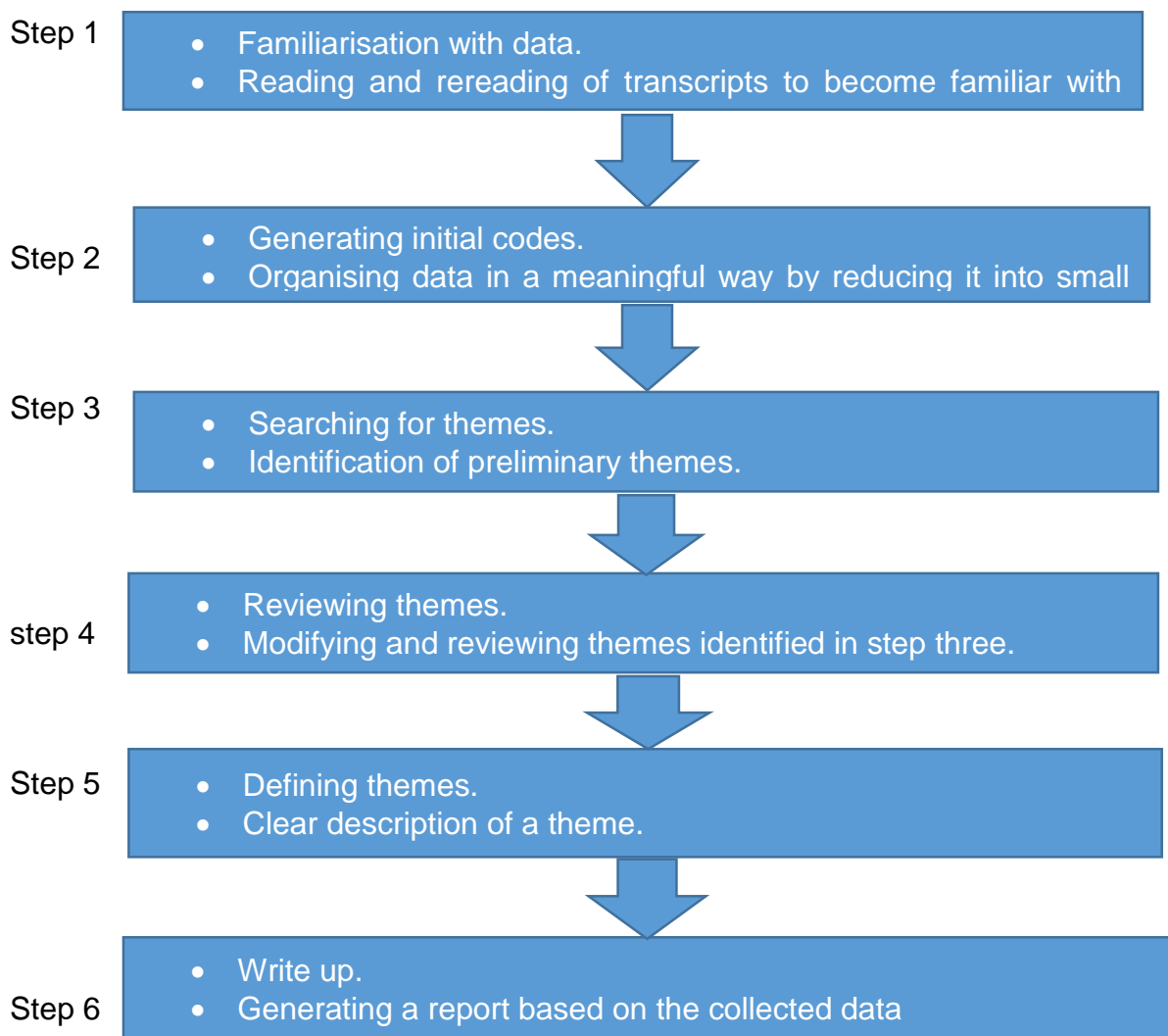
In September 2024 the researcher visited school A. Unfortunately, the principal was not present. The principal's office was used as the interview room, and only the teacher participants of this school were interviewed. In October 2024 the researcher revisited school A, where she met the principal and the learner participants, with consent forms already signed by the parents/guardians. The learners were successfully interviewed.

#### **4.8 DATA ANALYSIS**

The objective of data analysis is to understand the various constitutive parts of data by examining the relationship between ideas and identifying any patterns or trends from the data (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). The collected data were analysed by making use

of Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, according to Kiger and Varpio (2020), is a method for describing data involving interpretation in the processes of selecting codes and constructing themes. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes in qualitative data.

The diagram below shows the six steps of thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clark (2006).



**Figure 4-1: *The Thematic Analysis of Braun and Clark (2006)***

The thematic analysis of Braun and Clark (2006), as outlined by Kiger and Varpio, are explained in detail below.

#### **4.8.1 Step 1: Become familiar with the data**

The first step in thematic analysis is becoming familiar with the entire data set, which involves re-reading the interview transcripts. This offers a valuable orientation to the raw data. This step forms the basis of the subsequent steps (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Additionally, this step also entails the transcription of data, which serves as a major way of becoming familiar with the data (Maquire & Delahunt, 2017). After transcribing the interviews, the researcher started making notes and jotting down important ideas. The audio recordings ensured synchronisation between the recorded data and the transcribed data.

#### **Step 2: Generating initial codes**

This step involves the organisation of data in a meaningful and logical way (Maquire & Delahunt, 2017). Here the researcher begins to take notes on potential data items of interest, questions, and other initial ideas. This is the code generating stage, where the researcher applies the same codes to the whole data set by labelling data excerpts with relevant codes and taking note of patterns and connections (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). After coding all data, the researcher organised the data by codes in preparation of searching for potential themes. The researcher manually used a highlighter and pen on a printed hard copy to highlight the codes.

#### **Step 3: Searching for themes**

The third step of thematic analysis comprises the examination of the codes and organised data extracts to search for potential themes (Maquire & Delahunt, 2017). Theme identification is primarily an active interpretive process (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The important themes aided and provided major connections between data items and answered important aspects of the research questions. At this stage the researcher cannot be sure which themes will be kept, rejected or modified (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The researcher also checked the frequency of the sub-themes by utilising a data table.

#### **Step 4: Reviewing themes**

At this stage, data extracts can be reorganised, and the themes modified in order to capture and reflect the coded data. At this point themes can be added, combined, divided or even rejected. During this process the researcher should keep detailed notes their processes and decisions regarding how themes were developed, modified or discarded (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The descriptions of themes included illustrative quotes and codes that represented the theme (Campbell, Orr, Durepos, Nguyen, Li & Whitemore, 2021). The researcher used highlighters to colour-code the data that was linked with each theme. At this stage the researcher ensured that the themes were coherent, and that the data supported the themes.

#### **Step 5: Defining and naming themes**

This stage forms the final refinement of the themes (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The researcher creates a definition and narrative description of each theme. The researcher looks for areas of overlap between themes and identifies emergent sub-themes which can be used both to provide a more detailed explanation of themes, and to describe hierarchies within the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Here the researcher looked for connections between themes and sub-themes, after which the themes were categorised based on different research questions and labelled accordingly.

#### **Step 6: Write-up**

In this last step the researcher compiles a report. The writing process had already started from stage one, through the processes of note taking, describing themes and selection of data quotations in the preceding steps. The report should therefore include a description and a clear, concise and logical narrative on how the researcher interprets the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The report should extend beyond a simple description of data to make a captivating argument that answers the initial research questions (Campbell *et al.*, 2021). In this case a full dissertation report was written based on the analysed data.

This method of data analysis was deemed appropriate in this study because of its flexibility and its applicability to several qualitative methods. It further allowed the researcher to summarise and highlight main features, and to interpret a varied range

of data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). The collected data from the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, coded, and categorised to form themes.

#### **4.9 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Trustworthiness is the overall impression of quality related to the research process (Rose & Johnson, 2020). It denotes how well the researcher has carried out the study (Witell, Holmlund & Gustafsson, 2020). To prevent undue influence and bias of the research findings, the researcher must take proactive measures to preserve the credibility of the study (Mirza *et al.*, 2023). Rose and Johnson (2020) believe that the trustworthiness of qualitative research is dependent on several aspects encompassing epistemological understandings, the depth of the literature engaged, the suitability of the theoretical positioning of the argument, and the deployment and selection of numerous data generation methods. In this study, to guarantee its trustworthiness, the researcher employed the criteria as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, dependability confirmability, and transferability. The researcher also used member checking to ensure trustworthiness in the study by sharing a draft report of the collected data with the research participants (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

##### **4.9.1 Credibility**

Credibility is a crucial component of trustworthiness. It is about how consistent the findings are with reality (Stahl & King, 2020). Muzari *et al.* (2022: p.18) add that “credibility is the truth-value of the findings and is based in the environmental and cultural context of the participants”. Credibility denotes the confidence placed in the accuracy of the research findings. It establishes whether the way the data were interpreted and presented has distorted the actual meaning of the data, or not (Megheirkkouni & Moir, 2023). Kakar, Rasheed, Rashid and Akhter (2023) affirm that a study is considered credible when the results are accepted by readers and shared appropriately with others. If the research findings are like human experiences, the study is deemed credible. Moreover, the experience of a researcher is one indispensable aspect of credibility in research. This suggests that the researcher must be upfront about all their research experiences to enable the reader to infer the

credibility of the results in the light of the researcher's authority (Kakar *et al.*, 2023). In this specific study the researcher ensured credibility by audio recording all the interactions the researcher had with the research participants.

Another way that the researcher guaranteed credibility was through member checking. Member checking is the process of providing the participants with a copy of the results to verify data and make modifications where needed. "Here the research participants are provided a pre-publication copy of research right-ups to solicit their feedback regarding accuracy of data" (Stahl & King, 2020: p. 27). Member checking, also called respondent validation, is defined by Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020) as the practice of checking back with the research participants to establish if the study is in line with the information, they provided, to make clarifications and elaborate more on their responses. In this specific study, the researcher provided a copy of the findings of the research to the participants to review the data and suggest corrections. This enhanced the quality of the research and aided the researcher to reduce unintentional researcher bias (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023).

#### **4.9.2 Dependability**

Dependability is another significant element of trustworthiness, according to Stenfors, Kajamaa and Bennett (2020). It denotes the extent to which the research could be replicated in similar conditions. Johnson *et al.* (2020) avers that here the researcher describes the research process in full, so that the work can be repeated. Dependability refers to the degree to which the research findings are stable over time. It establishes whether the research findings would be repeated if the research were to be conducted with the same investigator, or with another investigator, in the same setting or in a different one (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023). The consistency of the data if the findings of the study are replicated in a similar setting and with similar research subjects, points to the dependability of the findings. Furthermore, to ensure dependability in a qualitative study, the research process must be described comprehensively so that other researchers who want to conduct a similar study can replicate the process (Kakar *et al.*, 2023).

### **4.9.3 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the establishment of provable direct evidence from the experiences the researcher shares with the study participants (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). Here the researcher confirms and informs the reader that the findings are founded on, and are a reflection of the data gathered from the participants (Johnson *et al.*, 2020). Haven and Van Grootel (2019) state that confirmability regards whether the analysis of data was logical, and whether the interpretations generated from the data were fair. Kakar *et al.* (2023) advance that confirmability mean the degree of fairness of the research results, which entails the transparency of the original responses. It establishes whether the study data and interpretation of the findings are inventions of researcher's imagination, or whether they have been truthfully derived from the responses of the participants (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023).

### **4.9.4 Transferability**

This refers to the possibility that the study findings can be transferred to similar situations, circumstances and contexts (Muzari *et al.*, 2022). Stenfors *et al.* (2020) define transferability as the degree to which the findings of the study may be transferred to another setting, group or context, and how this influences the findings. Johnson *et al.* (2020) acknowledge that the researcher should provide enough background information so that the readers can decide whether the results are relevant to their context or situation. Kakar *et al.* (2023) concur that transferability offers the extent of the application of the research findings in a similar setting or context, or with a similar group. This implies that transferability suggests that the research findings of a specific qualitative inquiry should be transferrable to other contexts and be applicable to other research participants (Megheirkouni & Moir, 2023).

#### **4.10 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH**

It is hoped that the study will generate knowledge that will add to the existing literature regarding the perceptions of teachers and learners about the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools. It is envisioned to assist school-going orphans with sustainable solutions in addressing their challenges and enhancing their holistic well-being. It could also aid the relevant ministry to develop strategies and programmes to promote the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. It will hopefully provide all relevant stakeholders with an understanding of how to approach orphaned learners' multi-dimensional challenges in order to promote their holistic well-being. The study is also envisaged to assist legislators in the formulation of policies that could facilitate a holistic approach to enhance orphaned learners' well-being.

#### **4.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Researchers must abide by certain ethical considerations when dealing with human subjects. Ethics denotes the norms and values that guide decisions about the collection and analysis of data, and the dissemination of findings (Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza, 2023). According to Johnson *et al.* (2020: p.141), "ethical conduct refers to how moral principles and values form part of the research process". The researcher is bound to observe standards of ethical behaviour throughout the research process in order to generate data of a high standard. In this study, the researcher protected the dignity of the participants by ensuring that they were respected and remained free from any form of harm (Johnson *et al.*, 2020). The researcher obtained ethical clearance from the ethics committee of the University of Free State, with approval number **UFS HSD2023/2503**. Approval was also obtained from the Lesotho Ministry of Education and the schools where the data were collected. The researcher sought informed consent from the participants before commencing with data collection. The issue of informed consent dictates that the researcher must inform the participants about their right to participate in the study (Mirza *et al.*, 2023). The respect of participants' consents to participate in a study is valued and guaranteed if they wish to (Muzari, *et al.*, 2022). In this study, the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage

of the research process. In the case of children, permission was sought from the parents and guardians. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their information, and of the safe keeping of the audio transcripts on a password-protected computer. They were guaranteed that pseudonyms would be used, and that their true identities would be masked. This was done to avoid exposing the identity of the participants, which could lead to their identification (Muzari *et al.*, 2022).

The researcher had a counsellor on standby throughout the process of data collection, to mitigate any distressful situation that could arise during the data collection process, particularly when dealing with orphaned children.

#### **4.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Like all studies, this research has its own challenges. Time constraints was one. The researcher is permanently employed, so it was difficult to divide time between work and academic work. During the data collection process, the researcher was recalled to her work to facilitate at a workshop, and when the workshop ended, the school had closed for a holiday. Another challenge was financial constraints.

#### **4.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented a detailed methodological framework that guided the study, it provided a synopsis of research approach, research design, research paradigm, a thorough explication of population of the study and the context where the study was conducted. It further expounded on the research part selection process, data collection technique and process, value of research, the criterion followed to ensure trustworthiness of the study, ethical considerations limitations of study and conclusion.

## CHAPTER 5 - PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter focused on the methodology employed to carry out this study. This chapter reiterates the objectives of the study with the aim of presenting, analysing and interpreting the results that emanated from the data that was generated in line with the study's set objectives. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

It has been clearly stated in Chapter one that the purpose of this study is to explore and propose a framework that could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools. The study's defined objectives are as follows:

- To explore the experiences of orphaned learners about their holistic well-being in Lesotho secondary schools;
- To identify the challenges that are impeding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools;
- To explore how the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools is interpreted and understood;
- To identify strategies and structures that are available for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools.

The above-mentioned objectives were used to generate data. The data was analysed through thematic analysis, as it has been detailed in the methodology chapter (Chapter four). The major themes that emerged from this study revolved around the exploration of a framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho schools, are as follows:

- i) Experience of orphaned learners about their holistic well-being
- ii) Challenges impeding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners
- iii) Conceptualisation of orphaned learners' holistic well-being
- iv) Strategies and structures that are available for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners' in Lesotho secondary schools

**Table 5.1: Findings of the data collected from the interviews**

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
<b>Experiences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty and a lack of resources</li> <li>• Feelings of sadness and depression</li> <li>• A lack of support and maltreatment</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient academic support and financial constraints</li> <li>• Lack of psychosocial support</li> </ul>
<b>Conceptualization of holistic well-being</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support in all aspects</li> <li>• Provision of life skills</li> <li>• Acquisition of learning resources and basic needs</li> <li>• Self-acceptance and conducive environment</li> </ul>
<b>Strategies and structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of counselling and psychosocial support</li> <li>• Empowering guardians on how to handle orphaned children</li> <li>• Collaborative support between schools, relatives and the community</li> <li>• Academic support and mentorship</li> </ul>

## **5.2 PRESENTATION OF THEMES**

### **5.2.1 Theme One: The Experiences of Orphaned Learners Regarding Their Holistic Well-Being**

The participants clearly explained their experiences regarding their holistic well-being. They revealed that orphanhood is a very painful experience which is characterised by a lot of difficulties including poverty and lack of resources, a lack of support and maltreatment, and feeling of sadness and depression. The participants in this study eloquently stated that all these experiences are definitely related to orphanhood and affect their holistic well-being in Lesotho secondary schools and at their respective homes.

#### **5.2.1.1 Sub-theme one: Poverty and a lack of resources**

Poverty emerged as one of the glaring challenges stated by the participants. Poverty is the situation of not being able to meet all the basic material needs of a person. The participants revealed that financial constraints make it difficult for them to access basic human needs, specifically those related to school. They explained that they cannot participate in certain school activities such as excursions, educational tours and sporting activities. These are some of the responses from the participants:

#### **Alina**

*“Being an orphaned learner is a very painful experience because we are faced with a lot of challenges that at some point we feel if our parents were still alive, we would not be confronted with those challenges.”*

*“As I have already mentioned that I stay alone, sometimes I need some cosmetics like bath soap, I rely on my grandmother’s old pension grant, and if she does not have money yet, it becomes a problem”* continued Learner 3.

#### **Adeline**

*“There are times when I lack some needs and I do not get them, I sometimes feel like maybe if my mother was still alive, she would be able to make all means to assist me.”*

**Peter** indicated:

*“I can talk about the financial constraints, lack of finances is the biggest challenge, because to be an orphan or when one is an orphan and they have that support and the guardians who are financially stable one cannot even recognise easily that such a learner is orphaned, these learners become more exposed when there is financial problems, that’s when one would realise that the issue of orphanhood is very touching, the finances affect so many things like the way we dress and all other materials that need money, tuition fees which ultimately contribute to school dropouts.”*

The participant continued:

*...then as a class teacher you have to give an explanation on why the situation is like that in your class so one may realise that about 80% of learners drop out because of the financial constraints.”*

**Peter** further said:

*“.....another challenge that affect mostly boys is that they usually drop out of school when they cannot meet all their needs, there are a lot of them who have dropped out of schools”.*

**Raymond** concurred:

*“Ok I think it’s poverty, for example just having a school uniform is a big struggle, that is why here in our school we have an office called OVC office which specifically deals with the issues of orphaned learners to ensure their well-being is taken care of, they also buy them school shoes when they have any shortage to some extend they even buy these orphaned learners food, so those are the challenges that they have.”*

**Lizzy** stated:

*“From there some of these learners drop out of school because of poverty, they are often isolated even in class they are not active like other learners.”*

The participants revealed that poverty as one of the factors that are attributable to orphanhood has an adverse impact on the lives of orphaned learners. They are not able to address their basic human needs or acquire their learning resources. It even

affects their appearance. One participant specifically pointed out that the high dropout rate results from poverty and affected mostly boys.

**Anna** indicated:

*“Sometimes they provide cosmetics, food parcels and school uniform.”*

**Prudence** showed:

*“Sometimes you will be informed that there is no food, and you take out your money you buy them food, even when you look at them in your class, there are no shoes and uniform is a problem, again you have to take your own money from your pocket to assist such a learner.”*

**Adeline** explains:

*“I get everything I need from the people I stay with; they always provide a helping hand provided they have finances. There is never a time I think how things could be because I do not have a mother, it’s been a while since her passing, so I am now used to the life I am living now.”*

However, some participants indicated that they are still able to meet their basic human needs through the assistance of guardians, siblings, teachers and the social grant. They explained that they can meet their daily basic needs despite their orphanhood.

### **5.2.1.2 Sub-Theme Two: Feelings of Sadness and Depression**

The data generated revealed that orphaned learners are occasionally overwhelmed by feelings of sadness and depression. Most of the participants, learners and teachers alike, mentioned the issue of sadness and depression as a major challenge experienced by orphaned learners.

**Adeline** stated:

*“Yes, particularly when I do not feel well or when I’m hurt or when something wrong has happened and I know I have not done it, I normally do not explain myself that I did not do it, they will see for themselves. Sometimes I experience sadness and I normally keep quiet till the feeling fades away.”*

**Adeline** added:

*“I normally do not feel like telling people anything.....”* [nodding her head]

From the verbatim quoted above, it is evident that it is sometimes not easy for orphaned learners to open up about their feelings.

**Alina** added:

*“Sometimes I feel so depressed, I only feel better when I am here that I always feel like I can be at school all the time. But that was worse before I moved out of my auntie’s place.”*

In the above response the participant was specific that her only safe space is at school, where she feels she could remain in order to feel good.

The participant further stated:

*“One other thing that I feel like I need counselling therapy when I feel sad.”*

**Peter** said that:

*“Some of these learners are always dull and depressed.”*

**Peter** again indicated:

*“Some of them are stressed because their parents’ properties are grabbed after the loss of their death and then they are neglected, normally the community considers the orphans who are financially stable.”*

The above quotations show that some participants feel they need counselling, as it was revealed that they feel mostly dull and depressed. Some responses discovered that orphans are often neglected, and their properties appropriated by the community and relatives, particularly when they do not have money.

### **5.2.1.3 Sub-Theme Three: Lack of Support and Maltreatment**

Another important revelation from the data is a lack of support of orphaned learners, and maltreatment by siblings and guardians. Some participants clearly stated that they are maltreated and verbally abused by their siblings. Below are some of the excerpts from the participants.

**Alina** explained:

*“Sometimes when one makes mistakes, the treatment we get from our siblings is not good, we are often not considered like other normal children by people we live with, it’s as though we make the mistakes because we are orphans and we do things intentionally.”*

This response touches on the issue of treatment. It is clear that the participant believes that they are unfairly treated by their guardians and siblings. Often their mistakes are considered to be on purpose.

**Alina** continued:

*“My grandmother sometimes tells me to go to my aunt who always turns her back on me telling me that I’m a burden to her because of my orphanhood status as she cannot afford to suffer because of me.”*

*“Even my sisters always complain when I need and seek assistance from them.”*

*“Sometimes the school provides support in the form of food packages to orphaned learners who cannot afford, there is this one orphaned learner who sometimes get food package from teachers. They are really supportive. However, I think it’s not enough to provide only material things we need counselling.”*

**Robert** highlighted:

*“They do not provide for all my needs, but I’m satisfied with the little that they do.”*

The above excerpts show that orphaned learners do get some support, but they indicated that the support is based mostly on material things. They also stated that the support they get should not be limited to material things, as they also need psychosocial support. One participant stated that her siblings are impatient with her and are not ready to make sacrifices for her needs.

**Lizzy** explained:

*“They react in a manner that they feel they are ill-treated because they are orphaned learners. I remember one time I overheard a conversation between two elderly women talking about their grandchildren, this other woman was*

*sharing her experience saying her grandchild complains about her, she wants to be in charge of her late parent's money."*

The above response by the participant shows that orphaned learners sometimes exhibit negative behaviour.

**Raymond** showed:

*"I think it's because where they come from maybe there is not enough support that they could get from their real parents, some are staying alone while others stay with their grandparents and relatives."*

*"They do not get enough support from the families they come from, but in a case whereby they stay on school campus we have a boarding and hostels you may find that their performance improves."*

In the above extracts the participant indicated that some of the orphaned learners stay alone where there is little or no support at all. He further stated that it has been proven that if such learners stay in school hostels their performance improves.

**Adeline** pointed out:

*"We are all treated well and taken care of here at school by our teachers as learners, there is no favouritism."*

The above quote revealed that at school the orphans are treated well and taken good care of without any discrimination.

### **5.2.2 Theme Two: Challenges Impeding the Holistic Well-Being of Orphaned Learners**

Some challenges which impede the holistic well-being of orphaned learners were identified by the participants. Prominent among these challenges are insufficient academic support and financial constraints, and lack of psychological support.

### **5.2.2.1 Sub-theme one: Insufficient academic support and financial constraints**

**Peter** asserted:

*“It is very difficult for these learners because sometimes for instance a teacher may request them to bring their instruments if it’s a Mathematics teacher and a calculator or a graph book and realised they cannot afford them.”*

*“One may find that in that particular subject learners do not perform well due to lack of access to learning resources.”*

**Anna** revealed:

*“The challenges that I often meet as my mother is not working, maybe here at school there are some resources needed that can assist me to learn effectively, and I cannot afford them.”*

**Adeline** specified:

*“There are times when I have some needs and I do not get them, I sometimes feel like maybe if my mother was still alive she would be able to make all means to assist me.”*

The participants’ responses related to a lack of academic resources, which negatively affects their academic performance in certain subjects. This is one of the challenges that impede their holistic well-being.

**Lizzy** emphasised:

*“These challenges do affect their performance, because some of them are performing above and at an average level, however when they are going through tough times their performance begins to deteriorate. The academic performance of these learners is very low even in simple issues they can’t cope.”*

The respondent further said:

*“Learning resources such as books, it is true there is a government subsidy in that regard but there are those that they have to buy for themselves, so they have nowhere to get them they just come to school without the necessary and required materials. It’s obvious that they are not going to perform well in that*

*particular subjects. The lack of learning material does not help them to learn like other learners.”*

*“Academically they do not have the needed support and a proper mentorship.”*

In the above quotations the participant indicated that a lack of learning materials due to financial limits affects the learning process, to the extent that learners cannot even cope with simple issues. The respondent revealed that orphaned learners are not supported academically. Besides the support learners get from different stakeholders, it seems as if it is not enough to cover all their needs. It is clear that these challenges create a vicious circle of vulnerability regarding these learners.

**Lizzy** added:

*“We also have school excursions which they already know they cannot be part of that because of poverty. Even in nearest places like last week we visited the orchard at Mahobong where learners could go on foot, but they were no longer interested to take part in school activities.”*

**Lizzy** continued:

*“To my knowledge it works very well but there can still be some challenges however they still manage to support orphans. They provide us with books school bags, they also cater for school excursions, like when you are a member of science club, and you do not have money for transport and food to go and participate they cater for that as well.”*

**Anna** highlighted:

*“Again the issue of finances you can also identify those who are struggling, luckily we have a very sensitive and considerate principal who can easily identify those learners. Sometimes it is like it’s the work of female teachers to identify the learners, but it is work in progress on daily basis we identify orphaned and vulnerable learners. Sometimes some you identify them through their performance.”*

The participants indicated that financial constraints contribute to a loss of interest by learners to take part in school activities, which ultimately affects their well-being.

### **5.2.2.2 Sub-theme two: Lack of psychosocial support**

**Raymond** showed:

*“They affect them, on their psychological aspect, we are able to observe them, sometimes we see some loneliness behaviour of a learner who does not interact with others and when you try to investigate you find out that the learner is an orphan, so that says they are psychologically affected.”*

The above excerpt revealed that sometimes teachers are able to observe unusual behaviour of learners, such as loneliness, and can ask them about it. The response confirmed that these challenges affect the learners psychologically.

The respondent further stated:

*“We do not have a specialist, but we have ehhhh..... What can I call it, some organisations that we work with, for instance, Help Lesotho is one such organisation, we have one member there who is our school alumna we always consult them when there is a need, and we do it for the whole school not one on one session, for individual sessions it is done by teachers whereby a teacher will talk to a student.”*

*“We provide counselling to support them psychologically, talking to a learner and asking them if they are well, they are able to open up, that’s what we do as far as counselling is concerned.”*

*“In summary, the support that we provide is offering lay counselling, I call it lay counselling because we as teachers are not professionals in the field.”*

The participant indicated that teachers provide lay counselling for learners as a group, and not individual sessions. He further stated that they consult other stakeholders to intervene where needed, as they are not professionals in the field.

**Robert** responded:

*“I do not tell anyone when I feel sad, I shift my mind to do something that will make me forget, all in all I think psychological support or counselling is needed.”*

**Alina** suggested:

*“I think counselling can help me a lot, one other thing that make me feel good is when I keep talking about my aspirations.”*

The respondents quoted above highlighted the need for the provision of counselling as crucial for psychologically supporting orphaned learners. Another participant specified that she feels good if she keeps talking about her aspirations.

### **5.2.3 Theme Three: How Is Holistic Well-Being Described, Documented and Understood**

The participants were asked to describe the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in their own words. Each of the respondents provided their own descriptions, which included the following sub themes: support in all aspects, provision of life skills, acquisition of learning resources and basic needs, and self-acceptance and a conducive environment.

#### **5.2.3.1 Sub-theme one: Support in all aspects**

In describing what holistic well-being is and how it can be understood, all the respondents concurred that it involves being supported in all aspects of life. The participants described holistic well-being as fair treatment which is not discriminatory. They also mentioned that it entails the provision of counselling, proper guidance and support of orphaned learners, and living without worries.

**David** said:

*“..... I think it should include a fair treatment, without discrimination, in everything that we do. It is because this issue of unfair treatment does not sit well with me. My aunt used to tell me that my mother has rested at the graveyard and I am busy disturbing her peace. She always utters nasty words to me...”*

The responded explained that fair treatment without discrimination constitutes holistic well-being.

**Anna** showed:

*“Similarly, our teachers have to support learners and sometimes provide them with counselling.”*

Another participant added that support by teachers and providing counselling created holistic well-being for orphaned learners.

**Prudence** stressed:

*“You know, an orphaned child needs to be reprimanded and be guided like a child to help him/her so that they know the difference between right and wrong, as most of the time they stay alone there are no guardians to help them.”*

**Lizzy** pointed out:

*“You know, an orphan is different from just a person who still has parents. It’s clear that kind of a student needs a very positive or great support from whoever they live with because just like any other parent you would reprimand a child to guide and give them direction of life, if such a child does not comply there is going to be a problem. This is to say for an orphaned learner to have a positive well-being they should have a good support.”*

The above excerpts revealed the importance of guidance to orphans living alone. They should also be provided with positive support in order to experience positive well-being.

**Richard** asserted:

*“For me when we talk of holistic it includes caring for a child in all aspects of life, socially to ensure that the child is not lonely rather is connected and can relate well with other learners as well as the teacher who have to be friendly to all learners, again is providing psychological support through lay counselling and instilling care and support for each learner.”*

The participant described holistic well-being as caring for a child, including all aspects to ensure good relationships with others. The participant also suggested psychological counselling for orphaned learners.

**Peter** indicated:

*“I think their welfare at school can help them to improve their well-being, when they are struggling at home and at school it becomes a problem, but here at school it is much easier because there is that uniformity where they cannot be stigmatised. Another issue is counselling which I believe if it’s incorporated at school can make the situation better.”*

**Alina** suggested:

*“I think counselling can help me a lot, one other thing that make me feel good is when I keep talking about my aspirations.”*

The respondents concurred and recommended that the welfare of orphaned learners at school is crucial, and that they should be treated equally. Incorporating counselling at school can improve the well-being of orphaned learners. Another participant stated that talking about their aspirations constitutes their well-being.

**Robert** stated:

*“An orphaned learner does not have to worry about their needs.”*

*“It entails not having to worry a lot.”*

The above quotations clearly state that holistic well-being entails a life without worries.

### **5.2.3.2 Sub-theme two: Provision of life skills**

Some participants indicated that holistic well-being involves the provision of life skills, particularly regarding sexual and reproductive health.

**Prudence** stated:

*“Yes, they also have to be taught about life in general like abstaining from sexual activities and all the consequences that are associated with it. We have to be open to them as much as possible.”*

**Richard** indicated:

*“I think the psychological aspect is already being addressed through the government through the introduction of life skills subject, like I said I think teachers of these subject should be well trained on also giving them information and life skills on how to be resilient how to deal with emotions. I think the holistic*

*does not only have to do with the academic aspect, but the learner has to be equipped with relevant skills that will make them a strong human being, That's holistic for me."*

The participant added that life skills would assist the orphaned learners to be resilient, and suggested that teachers of life skills should be well capacitated.

**Lizzy** showed:

*"They should be supported with finances for capital purposes. Again the issue of being donated all the time for me it feels like they are they exposed, or discriminated."*

*"I think it should include joining extra-mural activities such as choirs because they feel happier when they are with other people."*

*"I think orphaned learners should be provided with skills that will assist them to be self-reliant, because when they are always given food parcels it will make them too dependent."*

*"Yes, because when they do this work for themselves they become mature intellectually they would be independent enough to survive on their own."*

*"Others have their own talents which they have to be mobilised to use them to create income, there is this one learner who plait's others' hair."*

In the above extracts the participant clearly discouraged the issue of donations, as she believes it exposes orphans and promotes dependency. She suggested that the orphans be financed to start their own income generating programmes so that they become intellectually mature and self-reliant. Lastly the participant said the orphaned learners should take part in extra mural activities.

### **5.2.3.3 Sub-theme three: Acquisition of learning resources and basic needs**

A participant highlighted that orphaned learners should be provided with learning resources, and their basic needs should be met. The participant, however, showed that although there is assistance, it is limited as it does not meet all the needs of orphaned learners.

**Raymond** stated:

*“From there financially, they have their needs for example academic needs, in as much as the Social Development Ministry support them in terms of tuition fees and uniform but still there are other needs, we provide them with books and other resources but some it’s not possible like educational tours which are not catered for by Social Development, it says if finances are lacking there is going to be a problem.”*

**Adeline** responded:

*“For me, if I’m able to come to school having something to eat it is fine also being able to acquire all the resources needed at school such as schoolbooks, I feel my overall well-being would be met.”*

In the above extract the participant highlighted the issue of having bread on the table and learning resources as some of the aspects that constitute holistic well-being.

#### **5.2.3.4 Sub-theme four: Self-acceptance and a conducive environment**

The participants mentioned a positive, supportive and conducive environment, and self-acceptance as factors that promote the holistic well-being of orphaned learners.

**Raymond** stated:

*“Even the environment they live in has to be a conducive environment which is positive and allows this learner to grow as a child, and to play. In case where the learner lives there are issues of abuse that is not going to allow the student to feel taken care of and nurtured properly.”*

**Anna** showed:

*“I think for me we have to accept our situation, again as orphaned learners in schools we have to be treated well without discrimination that will make other learners to feel accepted and we are all the same.”*

**Raymond** submitted:

*“You know, an orphan is different from just a person who still has parents. It’s clear that kind of a student needs a very positive or great support from whoever*

*they live with because just like any other parent you would reprimand a child to guide and give them direction of life, if such a child does not comply there is going to be a problem. This is to say for an orphaned learner to have a positive well-being they should have a good support. Secondly even the environment they live in has to be a conducive environment which is positive and allows this learner to grow as a child, and to play.”*

In the above quotations the participants emphasised a supportive environment for orphaned learners which would enable them to grow and properly.

#### **5.2.4 Theme Four: Strategies and Structures Available to Facilitate the Holistic Well-Being of Orphaned Learners**

The participants were asked to outline available strategies and structures that could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. They mentioned various strategies and structures, such as providing counselling and psychosocial support, empowering guardians on handling orphaned learners, collaborative and holistic care, and academic and mentorship support.

##### **5.2.4.1 Sub-theme one: Providing counselling and psychosocial support**

The importance of counselling and psychosocial support cannot be over emphasised. There are various strategies that could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. The participants spoke about providing counselling and psychosocial support, and some participants asserted that this should be compulsory.

**Adeline** stated:

*“The community and people around the orphans should refrain from verbally abusing such learners, and treat them well as their own children, they should also get counselling sessions and they should get donations to cater for their school needs such as school uniforms.”*

In the above quotation, the participant discouraged the abuse of orphaned learners, and mentioned that catering for the needs of orphaned learners and treating them well could be one of the strategies to improve their holistic well-being.

**Robert** concurred:

*“They do not have to hurt us.”*

*“People who stay with such learners should consider themselves their parents.”*

*“I need it particularly when I’m hurt.”*

*“I think psychological support or counselling is needed.”*

The participant indicated that he needs counselling more when he is hurt, and he therefore believes it is necessary.

In the below excerpt, the respondent explained that the community and relatives should form part of the support structure of orphaned learners. She further recommended that psychosocial support for orphaned learners should be compulsory in schools.

**Alina** stated:

*“I think orphans can be provided with care and relevant support from the community, the relatives and in school we should be considered normal like other students who have parents. There should also be compulsory psychological support in school to support orphaned learners in order to improve our overall well-being.”*

Counselling is very important to support orphaned learners so that they can make peace with their situation. One participant stressed the significance of capacitating teachers with basic counselling skills to enable them to assist orphaned learners when the need arose.

**Peter** asserted:

*“I think the bottom line is counselling first and foremost for individuals to accept themselves, they have to accept their situation and come to terms that life has to go on despite their challenges.”*

*“I think us as teachers should be trained and be capacitated with basic counselling skills because we are always with these children so that we can easily identify when these children are suffering, it is true basic counselling is*

*part of the training we receive at the Teachers' Training College, however I believe it's not enough we need a broader knowledge."*

The participant also suggested that the government and other donors should conduct needs assessments before providing assistance, in order to find out the unique needs of every orphaned learner. She argued that not all orphaned learners are needy, so such prior assessments could assist them to concentrate on the ones most in need of assistance.

**Anna** said:

*"I also feel that they should visit us here at school and take all orphans in one room and talk with us and we should be given the chance to open up about our problems, so they will decide on how they can address all our challenges as we have different challenges."*

*"I think the school can also talk to us, there is OVC fund which assists orphaned learners, sometimes it's not all orphans that are needy so I believe when they talk to us, they can concentrate on those that desperately need assistance."*

**Anna** added:

*"I also recommend that orphaned learners accept their situation. I know this one will help us, and we do not have to compare ourselves with other learners."*

In the above excerpt the respondent stressed the importance of self-acceptance of orphaned learners.

#### **5.2.4.2 Sub-theme two: Empowering guardians on how to handle orphaned learners**

Some participants have stated that empowering the guardians of orphaned learners could be one of the major strategies in promoting their holistic well-being

**Robert** showed:

*"They should be educated about the life of orphaned learners so that they understand how they should handle and support us instead of hurting us."*

**David** concurred:

*“I think we have to talk to the guardians of these orphaned learners as well and try to support them by empowering them with some ideas on how to deal with and support these kind of students because sometimes when one is raising a child who is not his/hers they do not know when they are right or wrong, I think it would be important to empower those guardians unlike when you are raising your own child and you know what you want but as for the orphans they sometimes feel like you are being harsh to them. They also need support in that regard.”*

**David** added:

*“I think they can talk to our guardians to treat us well and guide us properly.”*

*“Most of the time regular meetings should be made to meet our guardians to find out how things are going at home.”*

#### **5.2.4.3 Sub-theme three: Collaborative care and support between schools, relatives and community**

The respondents highlighted the importance of collaborative care and support for orphaned learners between the schools and the community at large as a strategy that could enhance the holistic well-being of orphaned learners.

**Lizzy** recommended:

*“I think the establishment of support groups can assist them to accept their situation, that will assist them to approach life in a positive way, so that they feel part of the society”.*

**Richard** stated:

*“I think for me the school is doing a big effort, but we also need the support from the community.”*

The participant further stated that:

*“... can be very strong if the community can be involved, for instance the school would be catering for the school needs of a learner then when the learners is at home they should get the support to enhance the child’s well-being. I think*

*collaboration between the school and the community is very crucial, if we already have an OVC committee here at school which is sponsored by the parents, it should also exist at the villages so that these children get all the needed support, maybe they can also engage in agricultural projects. I think the community should be part of the support system for these learners.”* He continued:

*“Yes, learners come to stay here, it is not for all learners but our target is the orphaned and vulnerable learners, but what if we involved the community to ensure their well-being, so this makes these learners feel their safe space is only at school while we should be collaborating so that the learners could feel the same.”*

The above quotations touched on the involvement of the community in the care and support of orphaned learners, while mentioning the creation of support groups in communities. The participants suggested that it should be the responsibility of every member of the community to provide care and support to the orphaned learners in order to promote their well-being holistically.

#### **5.2.3.4 Sub-theme four: Academic support and mentorship**

Academic support and mentorship are indispensable strategies that the respondents explicated could facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. The following excerpts points to the respondents’ views on the importance of academic support and mentorship.

**Lizzy** stressed:

*“Life skill is creating a lot of awareness about some of the things these learners were not aware of.”*

She added:

*“It has got a very positive impact, if one can overhear when these learners talk lately I think they now view life differently the subject has promoted self-awareness. My nephew used to be the naughtiest child but lately when he talks one can hear that there is a lot of improvement.”*

The participant further explained that:

*“I think the school should cater for some of the learning resources of these learners such as books, mathematical instruments and pens, I think they should be provided by the school particularly during tests, because some of them use exercises for their notes for writing their tests, then they can bring them back after the tests so that they can be used by other learners, on the issue of school uniform I think external students that is those who are in Grade 11 now they can donate their school attire so that it can be used by others when they are gone. But it should be done voluntarily.”*

She continued;

*“I think our school should take full responsibility on all the learning resources of these learners.”*

**Adeline** stated:

*“I think here at school they can be assisted through career guidance and importance of education so that they avoid abusing drugs for their own future. Our teacher also can assist to buy them their school resources.”*

In the above excerpts the respondents highlighted the significance of life skill subject in schools which seem to have a positive impact on the lives of the orphaned learners and learners generally by creating self-awareness. Another participant recommended that career guidance and the importance of education could inspire orphaned learners.

The participant added that each student should be assigned a mentor to strengthen academic support.

**Raymond** showed:

*“That is very true, besides the frequent visits by Social Development Ministry, one thing that I have realised is that each orphaned student should be assigned a mentor, the teachers can be the mentors, even here at our school for instance, if we have about 50 orphaned learners and 25 teachers that says each learner can have two mentors to support the students academically not even financially but academically to ensure the student attends school on a regular basis.”*

Another respondent suggested that the government through the Ministry of Social Development should double their efforts and introduce a child grand programme for every orphaned learner at their respective homes. The participant further suggested that the orphaned learners should be provided health care services.

**Prudence** stated:

*“The Ministry of social Development which is already assisting with tuition fees and uniform I think they can double their effort to reach each child and support the learners fully.”*

She added:

*“I think the government can also introduce child grant programme for these orphaned learners like the old pension grant, just as South Africa is doing.”*

She continued:

*“It should be given to them at their respective homes. Even the health care services should go from house to house to interview these learners so that they know about them and provide the needed support like family planning services.”*

The respondent explained how their teachers offer them support at school by providing for some of their needs.

**Anna** pointed out:

*“Teachers observe us in our classes they call us individually and ask us about our situation. They cater for some of our needs they buy some of us school uniform and food depending on our different needs.”*

She added:

*“I think it is important to help the orphans as we stay with our single parents and some with their guardians so I suggest that we should be assisted about our needs like the stipend that we get from Social Development sometimes we do not get it.”*

**Anna** suggested:

*“The suggestion that I can make is that all us orphaned learners be supported with a stipend.”*

**David** concurred:

*“Orphaned learners should be supported with everything they need.”*

### **5.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with the presentation and analysis of the findings of the study. It started by highlighting the objectives of the study. The following themes and their subsequent sub-themes that emanated from the study were analysed: experiences of orphaned learners about their holistic well-being, challenges impeding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, how holistic well-being is described, documented and understood, and the strategies and structures available to facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. The chapter ended with a conclusion.

## CHAPTER 6 - DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented, analysed and interpreted data generated through interviews, and was guided by the four objectives of the study. The direct quotations and transcriptions were utilised to support the presented data. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings and a synthesis of the results with the reviewed literature and theoretical framework.

### 6.2 Discussions of findings as they relate to the existing literature

Each of the six themes and their sub-themes are discussed in detail. The first theme is ***the experiences of orphaned learners about their holistic well-being***, with the following sub-themes: 1. *poverty and a lack of resources*, 2. *feelings of sadness and depression*, and 3. *a lack of support and ill treatment*.

#### 6.2.1 Theme One: The Experiences of Orphaned Learners about Their Holistic Well-Being

The participants' responses in regard to the first research objective, on the experiences of the orphaned learners about their holistic well-being, are consistent with existing literature. Most of the respondents indicated that orphanhood is a very painful experience because of the challenges that orphaned learners are confronted with in all aspects of their lives and that affect their holistic well-being. From the responses of the participants, extreme poverty and a lack of resources confront most of the orphaned learners. One participant clearly stated this:

*“Being an orphaned learner is a very painful experience because we are faced with a lot of challenges that at some point we feel if our parents were still alive we would not be confronted with those challenges”.*

Studies have demonstrated the outcome of this theme, as a number of researchers have clearly established that orphanhood is a serious challenge in secondary schools.

Literature has established adverse impact that orphanhood has on the livelihoods of learners specifically their academic performance. A study conducted by Ntjana (2023) revealed that vulnerable learners in schools struggle to deal with the demands of academic work, and often repeat grades. Losioki (2020) further adds that orphanhood impacts on children's school enrolment, attendance and achievement because of limited resources to meet health care and food needs. They often lack self-confidence, which may lead to social isolation. All these experiences affect orphaned learners in all aspects of their lives. Orphanhood can be the result of a number of issues, including poverty, crime, violence, natural disasters and HIV and AIDS (Seth and Aji, 2019; Losioki, 2020; Kyarusi, 2022). In line with the ecological system theory which focuses on understanding child development in relation to environment orphaned children experience a lot of challenges as they interact with their setting, hence very exceptional experience affects the observed conduct in a specific environment (Soyer, 2019).

#### **6.2.1.1 Sub-theme one: poverty and a lack of resources**

Most of the participants raised the issue of poverty and lack of resources as one of the challenges affecting their overall well-being. Orphaned learners often lack basic needs such as food, shelter and clothes, and specifically school uniforms. Some of them cannot participate in school excursions due to poverty. For some of the orphaned learners it is difficult to adjust to their new reality. The death of their parents adversely affects the welfare of orphaned children, and makes it difficult for extended families to assist them, due to their own limited circumstances (Lombe, Mabikke, Enelemah & Chu, 2019). A lack of resources demotivates orphaned learners and perpetuate school dropout. Mwetulundila (2019) share the same sentiments, and state that factors that impede access to education for orphaned learners are financial, social and material resources. This is substantiated by the below quotations, which point to the fact that some orphaned learners no longer participate in school activities while a number of them even drop out of school.

*“One can identify these learners when they do not have school uniform, again when there are educational excursions and sports it becomes difficult for such learners to attend the tours”. (Peter)*

*“From there some of these learners drop out of school because of poverty, they are often isolated even in class they are not active like other learners. Some display an aggressive behaviour where they interact with other learners.”*  
(Lizzy)

*“Yes, the larger population of the school dropout are orphaned learners.”*  
(Richard)

These results corroborate the findings of some scholars like Mokgathe and Madiba (2020; Clerc *et al.*, 2022). These studies highlight that if the needs of orphaned learners arising from parental loss are not appropriately addressed, such learners are likely to face more difficulties at school, which will eventually result in a lower academic achievement. As a result, they often drop out of school. This aligns with the ecological system theory that the challenges that arise as result of the interaction of an individual in the microsystem or any other level will influence the behaviour of a person in the next level. An individual's behaviour is mostly learned at a microsystem level (Rus *et al.*, 2020), and therefore an individual is the product of the microsystem. Losioki (2020) states that orphanhood impacts on children's school enrolment, attendance and achievement, because of limited resources to meet their healthcare and nutritional needs.

### **6.2.1.2 Sub-theme two: feelings of sadness and depression**

The participants in this study stressed feelings of sadness and depression as major factors that affect the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. The loss of a parent places a lot of stress on orphaned learners, and also affects their emotional well-being. Research has proven that orphaned learners experience depression. Jaffer, Nassir and Ahmed (2023) concur that the situation is worse for young orphans, who may find it difficult to traverse complex challenges and emotions.

Some scholars like Kyarusi (2022; Mokgatle & Madiba, 2020) add that orphaned children are susceptible to psychosocial challenges including loneliness, worries, sadness and other stressful experiences that impact their overall well-being and adversely threatened their mental health and their learning activities at school. The below excerpts clearly indicate that orphaned learners' emotional well-being is affected by the magnitude of the challenges they are confronted with. In many cases

they regard school as their only safe space. Kyarusi further state that orphaned learners experience feelings of sadness and discomfort, which negatively impacts their academic activities.

*“It does not sit well with me because it makes me feel sad.”* (David)

*“Sometimes I feel so depressed, I only feel better when I am here that I always feel like I can be at school all the time. But that was worse before I moved out of my auntie’s place.”* (Alina)

*“Some of these learners are always dull and depressed, they do not interact with others they are isolated from other learners.”* (Peter)

The study revealed that orphaned learners often experience feeling of sadness and depression, which impact on their concentration in academic pursuits.

### **6.2.1.3 Sub-theme three: a lack of support and ill treatment**

Another prominent experience that emerged from the results was a lack of support and ill treatment by other learners, guardians and siblings. This is congruent to the existing literature, that orphaned learners are often treated badly by their relatives and guardians. They also lack the support they need as orphaned learners. Jaffer, Nassir and Ahmed (2023) advance that young orphans lack family support, and that the grieving process can result in emotional distress and neglect of their well-being, which ultimately hinders their educational pursuits. Some researchers further established that orphaned learners do not enjoy family support, but rather experience ill treatment from their families and relatives. As a coping mechanism they sometimes fall silent, or drop out of school (Mokgathe & Madiba, 2020). Orphaned children are often discriminated against at school and in health care (Alem, 2020).

*“There is this one time when my aunt was drunk she would tell me that my father is not my biological father, I was with my cousin, when I tell my sister about this, she told me it’s true she was not comfortable and afraid to tell me that.....she cried.”* (Alina)

*“Hey, people we live with are not kind to us.”* (David)

*“That’s my only problem, when she buys us our needs she is very discriminatory.” (David)*

*“Sometimes when one makes mistakes, the treatment we get from our siblings is not good, we are often not considered like other normal children by people we live with, it’s as though we make the mistakes because we are orphans and we do things intentionally”. (Alina)*

These quotations stress the bad treatment and discrimination that orphaned learners are subjected to by the people with whom they live.

*“You know, an orphan is different from just a person who still has parents it’s clear that kind of a student need a very positive or great support from whoever they live with because just like any other parent you would reprimand a child to guide and give them direction of life, if such a child does not comply there is going to be a problem.” (Raymond)*

In the above excerpt, the participant emphasises the importance of support and proper guidance to orphaned learners from the side of guardians and relatives, as their behaviour is different from that of learners who still have parents. However, in some cases, as in Ghana, the practice of remarriage and polygamy provides the opportunity for orphaned children to remain within their family setting, where they are cared for and supported by stepparents (Yendork, 2020).

## **6.2.2 Theme Two: Challenges Impeding the Holistic Well-Being of Orphaned Learners**

The findings of the study reveal some of the challenges that impede the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, such as insufficient academic support, financial constraints and a lack of psychosocial support. These challenges came out as the most glaring responses from the participants.

### **6.2.2.1 Sub-theme one: insufficient academic support and financial constraints**

This sub-theme is related to material and non-material support aimed at promoting the learning and academic performance of orphaned learners. As highlighted by some of

the participants, orphaned learners lack academic support due to various reasons, including, among others, poverty and living alone.

*“It very difficult for these learners because sometimes for instance a teacher may request them to bring their instruments if it’s a Mathematics teacher and a calculator or a graph book and realise they cannot afford them”. (Peter)*

*“I think their welfare at school can help them to improve their well-being, when they are struggling at home and at school it becomes a problem, but here at school it is much easier because there is that uniformity where they cannot be stigmatised”. (Peter)*

*“Some of them become challenged academically, I think it’s because where they come from maybe there not enough support that they could get from their real parents, some are staying alone while others stay with their grandparents and relatives. Some struggle academically, however we still have some exceptional cases, whereby you may find as much as they are orphaned learners they are trying academically they are being supported where they come from but those are some of the exceptional cases I’m talking about.” (Raymond)*

The findings of the study align with research in countries such as Kenya and Malaysia, which found that orphans are struggling to meet many of their basic needs in terms of nutrition, health care and education. Their levels of support remain low compared to other vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities (Karimi, 2019; Jaffer *et al.*, 2023). Children, particularly orphans, are faced with multi-faceted issues which are beyond their control. These include crime, financial problems, a lack of support and cyber bullying, which all have a major impact on their overall well-being (Kellock, 2020). Losioki (2020) and Mwetulundila (2019) share the same sentiments, and state that factors that impede access to education for orphaned learners are financial, social and material resources, to mention a few.

#### **6.2.2.2 Sub-theme two: a lack of psychosocial support**

The participants clearly stressed the importance of psychosocial support to orphaned learners in order for them to cope with their situation. From the below quotations the

respondents vividly highlighted how psychosocial support could assist orphaned learners to improve their academic performance if it is incorporated in schools.

*“Sometimes I feel like I need therapy or I can talk to someone but I am a very quiet person, I even do not share anything with people I live with.”* (Adeline)

*“Another issue is counselling which I believe if its incorporated at school can make the situation better. There is one counsellor who once visited our school but she was invited to address all the students not specifically orphaned learners. There was another one as well he was invited to address all the learners.”* (Peter)

*“They affect them, on their psychological aspect, we are able to observe them, sometimes we see some loneliness behaviour of a learner who does not interact with others and when you try to investigate you find out that the learner is an orphan, so that says they are psychologically affected.”* (Richard)

The findings of the study are consistent with that of other researchers. In a South African study, it was established that orphaned learners are in dire need of emotional and psychosocial support. They also need individual support with regard to their psychosocial, physical and emotional needs, due to a lack of survival mechanisms. As a result, they are predisposed to crime and substance abuse (Mayimole & Makhalemele, 2020). Ntuli, Mokgatle and Madiba (2020) concur that orphans are susceptible to long-term psychosocial challenges comprising depression, anger, anxiety and feelings of sadness.

### **6.2.3 Theme Three: How is the Holistic Well-Being of Orphaned Learners Described, Documented and Understood**

The participants were asked what holistic well-being meant for them, from their own perspectives. The following sub-themes were generated to define holistic well-being: *1. support in all aspects of life, 2. provision of life skills, 3. The acquisition of learning resources and basic needs, and 4. self-acceptance and a conducive environment.* These have been identified as aspects that constitute holistic well-being of orphaned learners. Well-being is described by Kyarusi (2020, p.1) as “a holistic health condition that includes all dimensions such as physical, social, spiritual and psychological

aspects of individual's life". Kellock (2020) agrees with the responses from the participants that working towards the positive well-being of learners enable them to flourish in all spheres of life, especially in their personal and academic lives. The participants were also able to construct meaning of holistic well-being based on their own experiences. This is in line with what Marron (2020) acknowledges - that each community boasts an exceptional combination of resources upon which it can build its future. In the context of this study schools, teachers, and orphaned learners are assets which are locally available for utilisation in finding a solution to their challenges and promoting their holistic well-being.

### **6.2.3.1 Sub-theme one: support in all aspects of life**

Participants from this study view holistic well-being as supporting orphaned learners in all aspects of their lives including physical, psychological, social and emotional. This is supported by the excerpts from the responses of the participants below. Supporting this findings, Aynsworth (2022) explains that well-being is multi-dimensional, and includes physical health, life satisfaction and positive feelings. It incorporates both individual psychological (hedonic and eudemonic) and social dimensions, is dynamic in nature, and is also influenced by the socio-cultural context and ideas of well-being. Yassin *et al.* (2021, p.141) add that psychosocial well-being encapsulates "the holistic functioning and well-being of a child, which encompasses the domain of psychological well-being, and includes social and emotional well-being, self-esteem and self-concept and future orientation, which reflects the thoughts, behaviour and an individual's reactions towards their environment". It clear that holistic well-being comprises the holistic functioning of a human being. The participants suggested that they should be provided with counselling. The below quotations from the respondents align with the reviewed literature.

*"I think counselling can help me a lot, one other thing that make me feel good is when I keep talking about my aspirations."* (Alina)

*"Ehhh.....for me when we talk of holistic it includes caring for a child in all aspects of life, socially to ensure that the child is not lonely rather is connected and can relate well with other learners as well as the teacher who have to be*

*friendly to all learners, again is providing psychological support through lay counselling and instilling care and support for each learner...” (Richard)*

### **6.2.3.2 Sub-theme two: the provision of life skills**

The participants strongly indicated that holistic well-being has to do with the provision of skills so that the orphaned learners can become independent, self-reliant and resilient in dealing with their emotions. Some participants indicated that access to health education and services constitute holistic well-being. One respondent discouraged the provision of food parcels, and maintained that it perpetuates dependency. Lombe *et al.* (2019) concur with the participants in this regard and argues that the labelling of orphaned and vulnerable children should not be overstated as it is likely to have a negative impact on their psychological and social state. They maintain that such labels may perpetuate the idea that orphaned and vulnerable are not like other children, thus limiting them to reach their full potential and capabilities. The researchers further assert that labelling influences the perception of such children and promotes stereotypes, as it weakens opportunities for self-actualisation and personal development. These findings have been substantiated by the excerpts below.

*“.....also giving them information and life skills on how to be resilient how to deal with emotions. I think the holistic does not only have to do with the academic aspect, but the learner have to be equipped with relevant skills that will make them a strong human being, That’s holistic for me.” (Richard)*

*“I think orphaned learners should be provided with skills that will assist them to be self-reliant, because when they are always given food parcels it will make them too dependent.” (Lizzy)*

*“Yes, they also have to be taught about life in general like abstaining from sexual activities and all the consequences that are associated with it. We have to be open to them as much as possible. Now at Grade 9 I am teaching the learners types of contraceptives and had earlier talked about how pregnancy is formed”. (Prudence)*

### **6.2.3.3 Sub-theme three: acquisition of learning resources and basic necessities**

The acquisition of basic necessities is another essential element of holistic well-being that emerged from the interviews. A lack of learning resources has been identified as one of the factors that impede the academic pursuits of orphaned learners. According to Rasidi & Mahmud (2023) educating an orphan is as important as educating a non-orphaned child, if not more so. The researchers further posit that although orphaned learners do not have parents, they also have ambitions and interests like any other children. Hence they need to be equipped with learning resources that will enable them to improve their academic performance. The participants echoed the need for the acquisition of learning material in order for their academic performance to improve.

*“For me, if I’m able to come to school having something to eat it is fine also being able to acquire all the resources needed at school such as school books, I feel my overall well-being would be met.” (Adeline)*

This participant highlighted that food and learning resources would be enough to meet her holistic well-being.

*“I think their welfare at school can help them to improve their well-being, when they are struggling at home and at school it becomes a problem, but here at school it is much easier because there is that uniformity where they cannot be stigmatized.” (Richard)*

*“From there financially, they have their needs for example academic needs, in as much as the Social Development Ministry support them in terms of tuition fees and uniform but still there are other needs, we provide them with books and other resources but some it’s not possible like educational tours which are not catered for by Social Development, it says if finances are lacking there is going to be a problem.” (Raymond)*

These responses alluded to academic resources, which include educational tours and books. The participants emphasised the importance of the welfare of orphaned learners at school. Losioki (2020) affirms the findings and states that orphanhood impacts children’s school enrolment, attendance and achievement, because of limited resources to meet their nutritional and healthcare needs.

#### **6.2.3.4 Sub-theme four: self-acceptance and a conducive environment**

Self-acceptance and a conducive environment some of the factors that defined holistic well-being, according to the participants' own understanding. The findings resonate with previous research that psychological well-being accentuates people's contentment about self-worth and the direction they want to follow (Dhaoui, 2021). Kellock (2020) also explains well-being as an effect of the environment, relationships and pressure to succeed, both personally and academically. Well-being is identified as a multi-faceted phenomenon which includes physical, emotional and social well-being. It does not only affect the orphans in their youth, but it may hold future implications which can result in mental health issues, homelessness, unemployment and incarceration (Kellock, 2020). Positive well-being, as advanced by Mabunda (2022, p.50), "is about positive feelings and satisfaction about the factors in the school environment that are perceived to contribute to its enhancement". The authors stressed that the holistic well-being of an individual encompasses all the aspects of life, inclusive of a positive living environment which is welcoming and making one feel at home. The findings confirmed what the scholars have indicated, with the responses below.

*"Secondly even the environment they live in has to be conducive environment which is positive and allows this learner to grow as a child, and to play. In case where the learner lives there are issues of abuse that is not going to allow the student to feel taken care of and nurtured properly."* (Raymond)

*"I think for me we have to accept our situation, again as orphaned learners in schools we have to be treated well without discrimination that will make other learners to feel accepted and we are all the same."* (Anna)

The learning environment has to be conducive for orphaned learners to feel free in order to promote learning. Some participants allude to the issue of discrimination free environment. In relation to ecological system theory, the environment influences the behaviour of individuals, this implies that a positive environment could reinforce a positive change in behaviour and performance of orphaned learners.

#### **6.2.4 Theme Four: Strategies and Structures Available for the Holistic Well-Being of Orphaned Learners**

Several strategies were identified by the participants that are available or that can be put in place in order to facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. These include the following: *1. the provision of counselling and psychosocial support, 2. empowering guardians, 3. collaborative care and support, and 4. academic support and mentorship.*

#### **6.2.4.1 Sub-theme one: the provision of counselling and psychosocial support**

The first strategy is the provision of counselling and psychosocial support. The respondents emphasised the significance of counselling in promoting the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. Some participants suggested that a needs assessment should be conducted prior to assisting the orphaned learners in order to establish who were most in need of assistance and support. Teachers can provide only lay counselling, and lack professional skills in this regard. This is consistent with the findings of the study conducted in Zimbabwe by Ringson (2020), which revealed that a Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) was the best psychosocial support intervention that could holistically provide in all the basic needs of school-going orphaned and vulnerable children in rural societies. The model was embedded in a holistic approach that could provide in the material and psychosocial needs of school-going orphaned and vulnerable children. Motsa (2020) advances that the provision of assistance is done through monitoring vulnerable children in schools, and providing the needed assistance to cater for their support needs. Kyarusi (2022; Alem, 2020) agree that the loss of one or both parents can result in psychological challenges among children, and enhances their susceptibility to abuse, exploitation and a lack of care from guardians. Counselling and psychosocial support are therefore clearly needed.

This resonates with the below excerpts from some of the participants.

*“I think the school can also talk to us, there is OVC fund which assist orphaned learners, sometimes it’s not all orphans that are needy so I believe when they talk to us they can concentrate on those that desperately need assistance.”*  
(Anna)

Aynsworth (2022) stresses that policies that are intended to promote children’s well-being are usually not informed by children’s wishes and views when developing

interventions or exploring the understanding of well-being. Through the asset-based and ecological theories, this study recognises the importance of every individual in addressing social challenges.

Anna stated that:

*“I also feel that they should visit us here at school and take all orphans in one room and talk with us and we should be given chance to open up about our problems, so they will decide on how they can address all our challenges as we have different challenges”.*

*“Similarly, our teachers have to support learners and sometimes provide them with counselling.”* (Anna)

*“...again is providing psychological support through lay counselling and instilling care and support for each learner”.* (Richard)

#### **6.2.4.2 Sub-theme two: empowering the guardians**

Another strategy that was suggested by the participants was empowering the guardians and relatives of orphans on how to manage the children. The findings of this study revealed ill treatment by some of the guardians and relatives of the orphaned learners. This is why some of the participants stated that the guardians also need support regarding how to treat and manage the orphaned learners. This has been substantiated by the quotations from David's responses below.

*“Most of the time regular meetings should be made to meet our guardians to find out how things are going at home.”*

*“I think they can talk to our guardians to treat us well and guide us properly.”*

*“I think it should include a fair treatment, without discrimination, in everything that we do. It is because this issue of unfair treatment does not sit well with me. My aunt used to tell me that my mother has rested at the graveyard and I am busy disturbing her peace. She always utters nasty words to me.”*

*“I completely cannot concentrate in class. I even fear to ask my teachers where I do not understand.”*

Another participant supported this:

*“I think we have to talk to the guardians of these orphaned learners as well and try to support them by empowering them with some ideas on how to deal and support these kind of students because sometimes when one is raising a child who is not his/hers they do not know when they are right or wrong, I think it would be important to empower those guardians unlike when you are raising your own child and you know what you want but as for the orphans they sometimes feel like you are being harsh to them. They also need support in that regard.” (Raymond)*

#### **6.2.4.3 Sub-theme three: collaborative care and support**

Collaborative support between schools, relatives and the entire community is an important strategy that was suggested by the participants to facilitate the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. Orphaned learners should not see schools as their only safe space, but they have to be supported in their respective homes by every member of the community. Bimha and Sibiya (2023) share the same sentiment, and state that in Ewsatini there is a multi-sectoral approach that was implemented by educators as the key players who provide care and support to learners in order to cater for their holistic well-being. In Kenya as well the government has established a multi-sector national orphans and vulnerable children committee, which is composed of various ministries including, finance, health, education and AIDS control, to mention a few. Its main purpose is to advise the government on matters relating to policy practices and implementation, and to monitor programs related to orphans and vulnerable children. Sadly, this assistance to orphaned and vulnerable children has not been sustainable (Karimi, 2019).

The participant indicated that although the learners get support at school, some of them do not have a place to stay, which impacts their academic performance.

*“Academically they do not have the needed support and a proper mentorship, another issue is some of them do not have places to stay, there is this one orphan here who has been called to stay on campus because he performs so well academically.” (Raymond)*

*“Obviously it is different because of the reasons I have already mentioned because you may find that they do not get enough support from the families they come from, but in a case whereby they stay on school campus we have a boarding and hostels you may find that their performance improves”.*  
(Raymond)

The participant continued:

*“I think it’s because where they come from maybe there is not enough support that they could get from their real parents, some are staying alone while others stay with their grandparents and relatives. Some struggle academically, however we still have some exceptional cases, whereby you may find as much as they are orphaned learners they are trying academically they are being supported where they come from but those are some of the exceptional cases I’m talking about.”* (Raymond)

*“Yes, learners come to stay here, it is not for all learners but our target is the orphaned and vulnerable learners, but what if we involved the community to ensure their well-being, so this makes these learners feel their safe space is only at school while we should be collaborating so that the learners could feel the same”.* (Richard)

*“I think for me, the school is doing a big effort but we also need the support from the community. It can be very strong if the community can be involved, for instance the school would be catering for the school needs of a learner then when the learners is at home they should get the support to enhance the child’s well-being. I think collaboration between the school and the community is very crucial, what we already have is an OVC committee here at school which is sponsored by the parents, it should also exist at the villages so that these children get all the needed support, maybe they can also engage in agricultural projects. I think the community should be part of the support system for these learners.”* (Richards).

#### **6.2.4.4 Sub-theme four: academic support and mentorship**

Another important aspect and strategy that was mentioned by the participants which could facilitate holistic support to orphaned learners are academic support and mentorship.

*“Orphaned learners should be supported with everything they need.”* (David)

*“I think is important to help the orphans as we stay with our single parents and some with their guardians so I suggest that we should be assisted about our needs like the stipend that we get from Social Development sometimes we do not get it”.* (Anna)

*“That is very true, besides the frequent check-ups by Social Development Ministry, one thing that I have realised is that each orphaned student should be assigned a mentor, the teachers can be the mentors, even here at our school for instance, if we have about 50 orphaned learners and 25 teachers that says each learner can have two mentors to support the students academically not even financially but academically to ensure the student attends school on a regular basis.”* (Raymond)

*“The suggestion that I can make is that, all of us orphaned learners be supported with stipend.”* David

This is in congruent with the findings of Seth and Aji (2019), stating that non-orphaned learners perform better academically compared to their orphaned counterparts. This could be attributed to a number of challenges that these learners are confronted with, such as a lack of academic support and mentorship, which affect their well-being.

### **6.3 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with a detailed discussion of the findings. The discussion was done in relation to the extant literature about the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. The four themes and their subsequent sub-themes that emanated from the study were discussed and the conclusion was stated.

## **CHAPTER 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter dealt with the discussion of the findings in relation to the reviewed literature. This chapter provides a summary of the study. It further expounds the proposed framework for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners and contribution of the study. It reiterates the main objectives of the study, and finally concludes with recommendations based on the findings, and suggestions for further research.

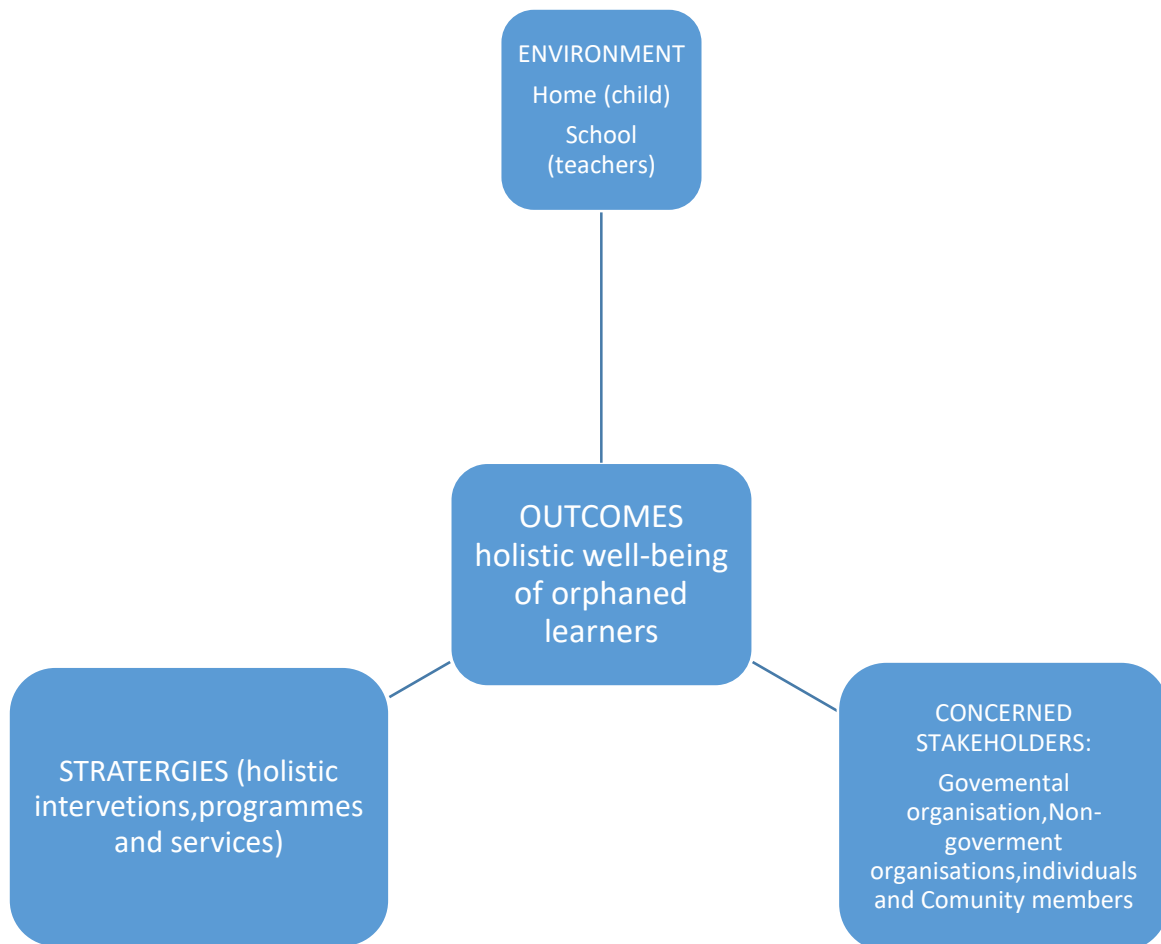
The purpose of the study was to explore and propose the framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools. This was done guided by the four objectives of the study, namely to explore the experiences of orphaned learners about their holistic well-being in Lesotho secondary schools, to investigate the challenges that are impeding the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools, to determine how the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho can be documented, described and understood, and lastly to identify the strategies and structures available for the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools.

### **7.2 THE PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR THE HOLISTIC WELL-BEING OF ORPHANED LEARNERS**

As guided by the findings of the study, the holistic framework is centred around the involvement of all stakeholders in addressing the social challenges pertaining to orphaned learners, as well as the holistic provision of services by the concerned stakeholders. The participation of all stakeholders that are mandated to promote the well-being of orphans have to be collaborative in nature, in order to contribute diverse skills and assets from different backgrounds. The orphaned learners should be actively involved in decision-making and suggesting solutions to their own problems.

The proposed model encourages the holistic provision of services to orphaned learners in order to support their overall well-being, which includes their psychological,

physical, emotional and spiritual well-being, in order to sustainably address their needs.



**Figure 7-1: The proposed framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners.**

The study brought to the fore the significance of allowing the orphaned learners to play a key role in conceptualising holistic well-being based on their own unique challenges and experiences. As opposed to the view of Aynsworth (2022) who advances that the policies that are intended to promote the holistic well-being of orphaned learners are hardly informed by childrens' views and wishes. Teachers as well are painstakingly regarded as key players in promoting the holistic well-being of orphaned learners in

this model because most childrens' vulnerabilities often manifest in schools where they interact with teachers almost ever day, hence they are ideal places for promoting the academic success and well-being of learners (Hlojeng & Makura, 2022).The proposed framework is informed by both Ecological theory and Asset-based theory.Ecological theory is premised on the believe that environment has a great influence on the developing individual, as such influences their behaviour and the social challenges that orphaned learners are confronted with on a daily basis. Thus, every exceptinal experience affect the observed conduct in a specific environment (Soyer, 2019).

Another theory that underpinned the study is asset-based theory, which is founded on the princilple that every individual is an asset because of the skills, knowledge and experiences they possess that could be tapped and optimally utilised to bring a positive transformation in the lives of the orphaned learners (Cassetti, 2020).This model positions learners and teachers at their respective environments as the key role players in shaping and promoting the holistic well-being of orphaned learners through collaboration with diverse and relevant stakeholders who are interested to address issues pertaining to orphaned learners through shared resources and holistic strategies.Again they were motivated to play a leading role in constructing the meaning of holistic well-being through their unique experiences.This is because they are assets not just passive recipients of aids and services rather active participants with valuable resources that can be optimally utilised to promote a positive change (Omodam, 2023).

In summary the interplay between a developing individual and their environment can either bring a positive or a negative behaviour.This model encourages collaborative holistic approach in services that are provided to orphaned learners, and active participation of all concerned stakeholders to come up with brilliant ideas in order to promote a positive change and bring a sustainable holistic solution to their well-being.

### **7.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

Through theoretical triangulation, the study has demonstrated the importance of considering the vital role played by the environment in influencing the behaviour and challenges of individuals. It also highlighted the fact that in order to understand an

individual and their challenges, one has to first understand the environment of that person. As such environment has been established to be a very significant aspect when studying and dealing with issues pertaining to orphaned learners.

This study has positioned orphaned learners and teachers as the key players and motivated them to play a leading role through their unique experience by contributing how their holistic well-being could be promoted and finding solutions to issues pertaining their own challenges, by considering their experiences and their voices as assets that could assist to bring a positive change in their lives.

The participants have also conceptualised holistic well-being based on their own perspectives, thus were able to envisage what holistic well-being mean based on their real live situation. Lastly, they have also envisioned the strategies that could promote their holistic well-being.

#### **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON THE FINDINGS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be advanced. When the Ministry of Social Development designs programmes aimed at promoting the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, these should be holistic in nature so that they can address the challenges of orphaned learners in all aspects of their lives.

It is also recommended that counselling and psychosocial support be compulsory in schools, specifically for orphaned learners.

Needs assessments should be carried out before orphaned learners are assisted, and the views of orphans should be incorporated when designing programmes aimed at promoting their holistic well-being.

There is a need to provide constant training and re-training for teachers to provide them with the requisite skills set to enable them to manage and provide psychosocial support to orphaned learners for the enhancement of their holistic well-being and academic success.

It is recommended that the current National standards and guidelines for care of vulnerable learners be amended, in that they should not focus on vulnerability rather also be specific about the orphans and the services to be provided. Again the guide

lines should be binding for all the stakeholders concerned with addressing the needs of orphaned learners. There is a need for a framework that will guide all stakeholders responsible for the well-being of orphans in order to provide holistic services.

The study has uncovered collaborative care as one of the strategies that could facilitate and promote the holistic well-being of orphaned learners. It is therefore recommended that holistic collaborative care between various stakeholders and the community should be applied so that learners do not see school as their only safe space.

Lastly, the study has revealed a lack of support and ill treatment by the relatives and guardians of the orphaned learners. This has a profound negative impact negatively on their academic performance. It is recommended that the government educate and create awareness in the communities about the importance of supporting orphaned learners in order to improve their overall well-being.

## **7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In terms of further research, it is recommended that researchers who are interested in addressing social challenges pertaining to orphaned learners and their well-being should focus on double orphaned learners so that a deeper understanding of the phenomenon could be established, as the challenges differ.

I recommend the engagement of multiple methods such as participatory methods that could allow the participants who are not able to communicate properly with spoken language to easily express themselves.

The study used an interpretive qualitative approach and phenomenology design, I suggest that the same study could be replicated using a different methodology, particularly data generation techniques.

The study sample comprised of 10 participants and was confined to two schools in a semi-rural location, so the results cannot be generalised. I therefore recommend that further research could be done on a larger sample in the rural context.

## **7.6 CONCLUSION**

Orphaned learners are confronted with various challenges that affect them in all spheres of life, impacting negatively on their holistic well-being. This study focused on exploring and proposing a framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners, this was done through exploring the experiences of orphaned learners and teachers. It also identified the challenges that impede the holistic well-being of orphaned learners, and the strategies and structures available to facilitate the promotion of holistic well-being. The study furthermore explored orphaned learners and teachers understanding of how holistic well-being is conceptualised and documented. An ecological system theory and an asset-based theory were used to frame the study. Orphaned learner's adversities affect them in multiple ways thus, this calls for a holistic approach when addressing their needs in order to promote their holistic well-being. Most of the interventions aimed at assisting orphaned learners are based on material needs, while in reality their needs go far beyond that. They often experience ill treatment from their siblings and guardians, highlighting the need for a sustainable and holistic approach to promote their holistic well-being.

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## APPENDIX A: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT LERIBE SCHOOLS

Mankoaeng

P.O.Box 3

Leribe

Lesotho

19<sup>th</sup> November 2023

The chief education officer

Leribe Department of Education

Hlotse

Lesotho

Dear / Madam

### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT LERIBE SCHOOLS

I am Tsooana Mampitla Mahanetsa, a student at the University of Free State. I am doing my PhD in community psychology of education. My study is focused on "EXPLORING THE FRAMEWORK FOR HOLISTIC WELL-BEING OF ORPHANED LEARNERS IN LESOTHO SECONDARY SCHOOLS". I therefore kindly request your permission to conduct my research at any two secondary schools within Leribe District. The study will involve (2) teachers in each school and (3) orphaned learners. It is hoped that the study will make a meaningful contribution in literature on holistic well-being of orphaned learners. The participating schools will gain insight about the framework to improve the well-being of orphaned learners holistically. The results will be shared with the department.

I therefore request your permission to conduct interviews with teachers with three years' experience and more and orphaned learners. The normal school programme will not be interrupted.

For further enquiries concerning the information about my request, please contact me on my email, [mahanetsat@gmail.com](mailto:mahanetsat@gmail.com) cell number 58918936.

Your usual cooperation is highly anticipated.

Yours faithfully

Ms Tsooana Mahanetsa

REFERENCE

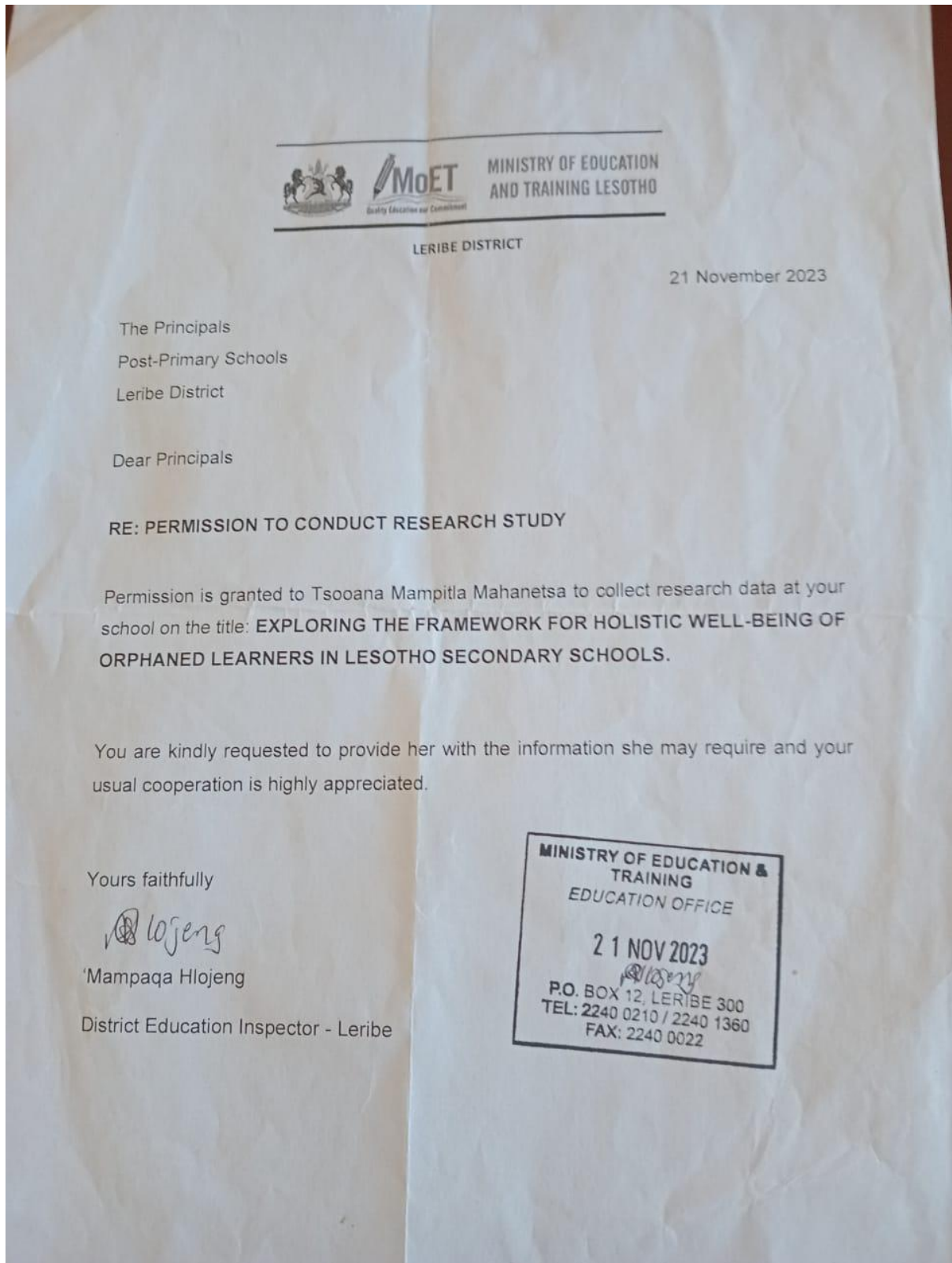
DR. PATRICK MWELI (supervisor)

Lecturer, Department of Education foundations (University of Free State)

Email; [mwelip@ufs.ac.za](mailto:mwelip@ufs.ac.za)

Cell number; +051 401 3654

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY



## APPENDIX C: INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM



### RESEARCH STUDY INFORMATION LEAFLET AND CONSENT FORM

#### DATE

03-05-2021

#### TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

*STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHENING SCHOOL-POLICE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE WELL-BEING OF VULNERABLE LEARNERS IN LESOTHO*

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

<i>TSOOANA MAHANETSA</i>	<i>2015129238</i>	<i>+266 58918936</i>
<i>Name of student/researcher</i>	<i>Student number</i>	<i>Contact number</i>
<i>Name of student/researcher</i>	<i>Student number</i>	<i>Contact number</i>
<i>Name of student/researcher</i>	<i>Student number</i>	<i>Contact number</i>

#### FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:

*DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PSYCHOLOGY OF EDUCATION*

#### STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:

*Dr. FUMANE PORTIA KHANARE (UFS staff member)  
+27 834321772*

#### WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

*The aim of the study is to explore strategies to strengthening school-police partnership for the well-being of vulnerable learners in Lesotho. The study is generally conducted to bring change to the well-being of vulnerable learners in Lesotho.*

#### WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

*The researcher works as police officer in one of the police stations in Lesotho. The researcher works for the Ministry of Police of the government of Lesotho. As A police officer I was among the team that analysed crime and became concerned by the cases involving orphans and vulnerable children which were mostly perpetuated by family. The researcher conducts the study to explore strategies to school-police partnership that will promote well-being of vulnerable learners.*

#### HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

No this study has not received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS.



**Approval number:** *Insert approval number*

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

*The researcher chooses six teachers from two schools, three from each school with more than three years' experience working in selected schools, because they interact with vulnerable learners, and six police officers from a police station with more than three years' experience and who participated in crime prevention programme because they conduct crime prevention gathering in schools. As for the participants' contact details, the researcher will ask permission from the principals because they are the ones in charge of the schools. The total participants will be 12, three teachers from each school, because two schools will be selected as research side. Six police officers will be selected from a police station.*

#### **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?**

*The data generation method that will be used in this study is focus group discussion. The researcher will conduct two focus groups, one for teachers and the other for police officers. The discussions will be audio recorded with the permission of the participants. Through semi-structured interviews, the participants will be asked open ended questions to enable them to elaborate on their answers. The duration of the discussion for each group is expected to last for not more than an hour.*

#### **CAN THE PARTICIPANT WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY?**

*The participation in the study is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for non-participation. Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. However it will not be possible to withdraw once they have submitted the answers from the given questions.*

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

*The study will be beneficial to participating teachers and police in choosing the best strategies to improve the well-being of vulnerable learners as they will have access to the findings and recommendations. Assurance of confidentiality will be done that everything discussed in an interview will be enclosed.*

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

*The researcher will be cautious of the unexpected. The researcher will assure the participants of anonymity and confidentiality of all information discussed and will guarantee the participants that it will be considered illegal and against the University ethics for any information discussed to be found in wrong hands.*

#### **WILL WHAT I SAY BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

*All information provided by the participants will be kept confidential and their names will not be recorded, anywhere and no one will be able to connect them to the answers they give. Participants' answers will be given a fictitious code number or a pseudonym and you will be referred to in this way in the data, any publications, or other research reporting methods such as conference proceedings. Only the researcher will have access to the data (transcriber/external coder) and the researcher will maintain confidentiality by signing a confidentiality agreement. The participants' answers may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including the members of the Research Ethics Committee. Otherwise, records that identify participants will be available only to people working on the study. Your anonymous data may be used for other purposes, e.g. research report, journal articles, conference presentation, etc. The researcher will keep privacy to protect in any publication of the information. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. Focus group involves assembling individuals to discuss a specific topic in order to draw from personal experiences, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes. While every effort will be made by the researcher to ensure that you will not be connected to the information that you share during the focus group, I cannot guarantee that other participants in the focus group will treat information confidentially. I shall, however, encourage all participants to do so. For this reason, I advise you not to disclose personally sensitive information in the focus group. The participants can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.*

#### **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?**

*Hard copies of the participant's answers will be stored by the researcher for a period of five years in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet in the office for future research or academic purposes; electronic information will be stored on a password protected computer. Future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Review and approval if applicable. After the expected period of time information will be destroyed by burning the hard copies and deleting all electronic information. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity the researcher will sign a confidentiality agreement. The researcher guarantees anonymity by use of pseudonyms. The measures that will be taken if injury or harm attributable to the study occurs is that the researcher will be at researcher will at risk too and liable to be sued.*

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

*There is no payment or reward offered, financial or otherwise to participants. The participation is voluntary and free. You should feel free to air your views, the voice record you notice is only meant to record the session in case some information is missed in an interview. The researcher will be cautious enough to any unexpected and assure the participants that they are secure about the information they provide. The researcher will sign confidentiality agreement to justify confidentiality of*

*information. The measures that will be taken if injury or harm attributable to the study occurs will be against the researcher and the University.*

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

*If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact <Tsooana M. Mahanetsa> on <+266 58918936 /66250367> or email <mahanetsat@gmail.com >. The findings are accessible for <insert time frame>. Please do not use home telephone numbers. Departmental and/or mobile phone numbers are acceptable. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact <+266 58918936 /66250367, in email mahanetsat@gmail.com>. Should you have concerns about the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact <Fumane Portia Khanare, email <khanareFP@ufs.ac.za phone number +27834321772> Feel free to contact and or email the given information about any concern about the researcher and to confirm confidentiality. In order to reduce the risk of identity, the use of pseudonyms will be used. Measures will be taken against the researcher should there be any harm and injury attributable to the study.*

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

---

### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (participant name), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable). I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings.

I agree to the recording of the *insert specific data collection method*.

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

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

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

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

Signature of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D: CHILD ASSENT FORM



### Child Assent Form

#### Participant Information Leaflet and Assent Form



Title of the research project: Exploring the framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools.

Researcher's names: TSOOANA 'MAMPITLA MAHANETSA

Address: MANKOANENG BOX 3 LERIBE HLOTSE

Contact number: +266 58918936/ 66250367

#### What is *Research*?

Research is something we do to find new knowledge about the way things (and people) work. We use research projects or studies to help us find out more about disease or illness. Research also helps us to find better ways of helping sick children.

#### What is this research project all about?

The research is about the well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools which affect their education because their overall needs are not met. Therefore this research seeks to find a sustainable solution to address all the challenges of orphaned learners by exploring framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools.

#### Why have I been invited to take part in this research project?

You are invited to take part in the study because you are orphans who experience these challenges and you can tell better how you need your challenges to be addressed. You are knowledgeable hence suitable candidate.



### Who is doing the research?

My name is Tsooana Mampitla Mahanetsa, i am a PhD student at the University of Free State who is worried about the well-being of orphaned learners in Lesotho secondary schools and I am interested to come up with a solution that will enhance the holistic well-being of orphaned learners.

### What will happen to me in this study?

The participant learners are going to participate in data generation methods. They are expected to answer to organised questions under the guidance of the researcher through interview. You are free to write down your answers. The interview will not last more than 1 hour.

### Can anything bad happen to me?

Since your parents know that you are participating in this study, should anything happen to you, you are free to report to your parents. Please also be informed that no harm will happen to you because all the ethical aspects will be considered and the participation will be in the school premises and each learner will be free to report if he/she is not feeling well during the course of the study

### Can anything good happen to me?

The participants including orphaned learners are going to get a chance to decide how their holistic well-being can be described, they are also going to find a solution to their challenges that hinders their education. The government will use the findings of the study to establish programmes that will address the overall challenges of orphaned learners.

### Will anyone know I am in the study?

Your participation in this study will be kept confidential, but please note the information about your participation will be given to study sponsor and is going to form part in the study. (NOTE: This information may not be applicable in assent forms for very young children).



### Who can I talk to about the study?

For any further enquiries about my request please use my email to contact me on; [mahanetsat@gmail.com](mailto:mahanetsat@gmail.com) cell number +266 58918936/66250367, or contact my supervisor Dr. Patrick Mweli on [mweli@ufs.ac.za](mailto:mweli@ufs.ac.za) or call him on +27 514013654.

### What if I do not want to do this?

Your participation in this study is voluntary, if you refuse, you can do so even if their parents have agreed to their participation. You can stop being in the study at any time without getting in trouble.

### Do you understand this research study and are you willing to take part in it?

YES

NO

Has the researcher answered all your questions?

YES

NO

Do you understand that you can pull out of the study at any time?

YES

NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX E: PARENT CONSENT FORM

Please return this section

Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_

- Do you understand this research study and are you willing to let your child take part in it? Yes  No
- Has the researcher answered all your questions? Yes  No
- Do you understand that the child can withdraw from the study at any time? Yes  No
- I give the researcher permission to make use of the data gathered from my child's participation Yes  No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

the undersigned Parent, further confirm that–

1. the Researcher has explained the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of my participation in the Study;
2. I have read (or had explained to me) and understood the Study as explained in the attached information sheet;
3. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the Study;
4. I understand that my participation in the Study is entirely voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty (if applicable);
5. I voluntarily provide the UFS and the Researcher with my personal information and consent to the UFS and the Researcher collecting, disclosing and processing my personal information in order to conduct the Study and any related activities in relation thereto;
6. I hereby acknowledge and confirm that I understand the purpose for which the UFS and the Researcher may collect, store, use, delete, destroy, outsource, transfer or otherwise process, as the context and circumstances may require and as contemplated in terms of POPIA, my personal information as set out herein;
7. I am aware that the findings of the Study will be anonymously processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings and that my personal information will be aggregated and deidentified at such stage;
8. I also give the UFS permission to share, without notification, the collected data with other researchers at the UFS or other Higher Education Institutions. This permission is dependent on the same principles of ethical research practices, anonymity/confidentiality, safekeeping of information, and other issues listed above applying.

## APPENDIX F: PROVISIPON OF COUNSELLING SERVICES TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Patite Heaven Counselling Services

Lisemeng 2 America

Hlotse - Leribe

Lesotho

23/03/2024

GHRC

University of Free State

Bloemfontein

### Re: provision of counselling services to Research participants

I 'MabafokengTsehlana a counselling therapist at the above company confirm that I am willing to provide counselling to the research participants (orphaned learners) of Ms Mahanetsa's PhD study titled "**Exploring the framework for holistic well-being of orphaned learners In Lesotho Secondary schools**" should need arise during the interview process.

In this case, every subject of research will be given three different sessions and the costs thereof will be incurred by the researcher.

Your usual corporation is highly anticipated

Yours sincerely

'MabafokengT'sehlana



Contacts 58841933 or [nteboheleng2021@gmail.com](mailto:nteboheleng2021@gmail.com)

## APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR TEACHERS

### Interview protocol for teachers

- 1) Are you aware of orphaned learners at your school?
- 2) What are your experiences about such learners in regard to their overall well-being?
- 3) How do the challenges affect the academic performance of orphaned learners and their general well-being?
- 4) What are the challenges that hinder orphaned learners' holistic well-being?
- 5) How do you normally deal with them to offer support to their overall needs?
- 6) What is your understanding of holistic well-being particularly of orphaned learners? And how do you think it should be described?
- 7) How do you think the holistic well-being of orphaned learners be recognised by government and concerned stakeholders?
- 8) What support structures are available to care for orphaned learners to boost their holistic well-being?
- 9) What do you think can be done to address the overall challenges of orphaned learners in order to promote their holistic well-being?

## **APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ORPHANED LEARNERS**

### **Interview protocol for orphaned learners**

- 1) Can you please tell me your experiences about your overall well-being as orphaned learners?
- 2) What challenges do you often meet in regard to your holistic well-being?
- 3) Can you explain how does the challenges you experience as orphaned learners affect your holistic well-being and your academic performance?
- 4) Do you get any kind of support? If so, what kind of support do you get? does it address all you needs?
- 5) What is holistic well-being according to your understanding as orphaned learners?
- 6) What do you think the government and other concerned stakeholders can do to offer the support you need?
- 7) What support structures are available to provide care and support to enhance your overall well-being?
- 8) What strategies do you think can assist in promoting your holistic well-being as orphaned learners?

## APPENDIX I: TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE DATA

TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE DATE: 18-09-2024 and 09-10-2024

SCHOOL A

PARTICIPANT TEACHER 1

INTERVIEWER: Are there any orphaned learners in your school?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I'm aware because they are a lot of them,

INTERVIEWER: Can you give the numbers or estimates?

INTERVIEWEE: On Average?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, please.

INTERVIEWER: Approximately, our student populace is 340 so I believe, even though there is no statistics the ministry of education sometimes collects the statistics for orphaned learners, I think **the are a lot of them**, another **evidence is an influx of different sponsors that we have here at school**, more than half of the learners here are sponsored so it says there are a lot of vulnerable and orphaned learners though I cannot give the exact number of those that sure orphaned.

INTERVIEWER: Can you please share your experience about the general well-being of orphaned learners in your school?

INTERVIEWEE: The experience or interaction or what?

INTERVIEWER: Your general experience about everything that concerns the orphaned learners.

INTERVIEWEE: Ok let me be just general because it is open,

INTERVIEWER: Yes, please.

INTERVIEWEE: I've been a **class teacher for five years** and a class teacher one of **your tasks is to ensure the well-being of the learners**, you **treat them equally**, **ensure that they are well dressed and their conduct** as well have to tell you that they are well so **that it's easier to realize when they are depressed**, so we interact with them and **they report to us their challenges**, we are often told by the management of the school that we have to **make our classes as conducive as possible so that these learners are free to report to us**. So there are cases where these learners report to us, it does not end there, here at school there is also an **orphans and vulnerable section** here at school, it is responsible for orphans and vulnerable learners, it **is funded by volunteers**, the **school also raises funds for that committee and some individual donors**. Even the **parents contribute**

every year. Our responsibility as teachers is to identify if there is any learner whom we suspect is vulnerable and report to the committee, then the committee will provide the needed assistance the learner has, it assists with counselling services and finances. That's how we interact with them.

INTERVIEWER: Can I ask you about the composition of the OVC committee?

INTERVIEWEE: The OVC committee?

INTERVIEWER: Yes

INTERVIEWEE: It has two members, during the beginning of each year it is the office that teachers volunteer to be part, but we also have a word to make suggestions considering the character of individuals who are dedicated and care about the well-being of learners.

INTERVIEWER: Meaning it is composed of only teachers?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: How many are they?

INTERVIEWEE: They are two teachers.

INTERVIEWER: Are they the one you report the challenges of learners to?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes,

INTERVIEWER: According to your experience how does these challenges that learners normally report affect their academic performance?

INTERVIEWEE: They affect them, on their psychological aspect, we are able to observe them, sometimes we see some loneliness behavior of a learner who does not interact with others and when you try to investigate you find out that the learner is an orphan, so that says they are psychologically affected. Again the issue of finances you can also identify those who are struggling, luckily we have a very sensitive and considerate principal who can easily identify those learners. Sometimes it is like it's the work of female teachers to identify the learners, but it is work in progress on daily basis we identify orphaned and vulnerable learners. sometimes some you identify them through their performance.

INTERVIEWER: What happens about it?

INTERVIEWEE: **It automatically drops down**, it becomes lower, we have cases where we would call them and talk to them, not necessarily the **OVC committee all staff talk to them and counsel and encourage them**.

INTERVIEWER: Do you provide counseling as teachers only or do you invite some outsiders to assist you?

INTERVIEWEE: We do not have a specialist, but we have ehhhh..... What can I call it, some organizations that we work with, for instance, **Help Lesotho is one such organization**, we have one member there who is our school alumna we always consult them when there is a need, and we do it for the **whole school not one on one session**, for individual sessions it is done by teachers whereby a **teacher will talk to a student**.

INTERVIEWER: What about the OVC committee that you talked about?

#### PARTICIPANT ORPHAN LEARNER 3 SCHOOL B

INTERVIEWER: What are your daily experiences as an orphaned learner?

INTERVIEWEE: Do you mean everything that relates with my life and general well-being?

INTERVIEWER: Yes all your experiences including the challenges and everything here at school and at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Being an orphaned learner **is a very painful experience** because **we are faced with a lot of challenges** that at some point **we feel if our parents were still alive we would not be confronted with those challenges**.

INTERVIEWER: How so where do you meet these challenges? Please explain?

INTERVIEWEE: Sometimes when one makes mistakes, **the treatment we get from our siblings is not good**, we are often **not considered like other normal children by people we live with**, it's as though we make **the mistakes because we are orphans and we do things intentionally**.

INTERVIEWER: What about here at school, are you done?

INTERVIEWEE: I think I'm done.

INTERVIEWER: Who do you stay with?

INTERVIEWEE: Now I stay alone at St. John, it's a local church, but my grandmother stays far from here at the place called Ha Lejone, **my grandmother is catering for my basic needs through her old pension grant.**

INTERVIEWER: Do you go to her place during school vacation?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, mme

INTERVIEWER: What challenges do you have that affect you well-being?

INTERVIEWEE: Hmm

INTERVIEWER: Your challenges that affect your overall life or everything that you need as an orphaned learner?

INTERVIEWEE: As I have already mentioned that **I stay alone**, sometimes I need some cosmetics like bath soap, **I rely on my grandmother's old pension grant**, and **if she does not have money yet it become a problem**, my grandmother sometimes tells me to go **to my aunt who always turn her back on me telling me that I'm a burden to her because of my orphanhood status as she cannot afford to suffer because of me.**

INTERVIEWER: Is that your aunt to say that to you?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, **even my sisters always complain when I need and seek assistance from them .....eish ....there are so many issues.**

INTERVIEWER: You have other siblings,

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, because..... *she nodded her head*, because I used to stay at my aunt's place who used to **tell me that I'm not my father's child.**

INTERVIEWER: How old is your aunt how come she says those kind of things to you

, how old is she?

INTERVIEWEE: She is over 30 years.

INTERVIEWER: Is she married?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, mme.

INTERVIEWER: At the church where you stay, how do they assist you with your needs?

**TRANSCRIPT SAMPLE DATE: 18-09-2024 and 09-10-2024**

**SCHOOL A**

**PARTICIPANT TEACHER 1**

INTERVIEWER: Are there any orphaned learners in your school?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I'm aware because they are a lot of them,

INTERVIEWER: Can you give the numbers or estimates?

INTERVIEWEE: On Average?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, please.

INTERVIEWER: Approximately, our student populace is 340 so I believe, even though there is no statistics the ministry of education sometimes collects the statistics for orphaned learners, I think **there are a lot of them**, another **evidence is an influx of different sponsors that we have here at school**, more than half of the learners here are sponsored so it says there are a lot of vulnerable and orphaned learners though I cannot give the exact number of those that are orphaned.

INTERVIEWER: Can you please share your experience about the general well-being of orphaned learners in your school?

INTERVIEWEE: The experience or interaction or what?

INTERVIEWER: Your general experience about everything that concerns the orphaned learners.

INTERVIEWEE: Ok let me be just general because it is open,

INTERVIEWER: Yes, please.

INTERVIEWEE: I've been a **class teacher for five years** and as a class teacher one of **your tasks is to ensure the well-being of the learners**, you **treat them equally**, **ensure that they are well dressed and their conduct** as well have to tell you that they are well so **that it's easier to realize when they are depressed**, so we interact with them and **they report to us their challenges**, we are often told by the management of the school that we have to **make our classes as conducive as possible so that these learners are free to report to us**. So there are cases where these learners report to us, it does not end there, here at school there is also an **orphans and vulnerable section** here at school, it is responsible for orphans and vulnerable learners, it **is funded by volunteers**, the **school also raises funds for that committee and some individual donors**. Even the **parents contribute**

## APPENDIX J: TURNITIN REPORT

### Mkahakane+TurnItIn.docx

#### ORIGINALITY REPORT

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